ACADEMIC ADVISING WEBSITES AS INDICATORS OF SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS AT HIGHLY SELECTIVE INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Academic advising can teach students how to engage with postsecondary curricula and connect curricular engagement to career exploration and lifelong learning. However, academic advising is both a one-on-one activity and a systemic enterprise, and institutions should thoroughly communicate the benefits and functions of advising on official platforms such as institutional websites. This study analyzes institutional websites and creates a thematic inventory of their content containing the purpose, strategies, and desired outcomes of undergraduate academic advising at 20 highly selective, four-year liberal arts colleges and universities that are members of the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE). Additionally, this study explores website content about specific methods and resources for how academic advising supports institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals.

The major themes emerging from this study include the promise of the continuity of advising, the possibility of advising relationships akin to mentoring experiences with faculty and peers, and holistic advising support provided by several people and aspects of the school's advising system. However, the promise of advising relationships also hinges on students' willingness and ability to be self-directed, self-reflective, and advocates for themselves. On these websites, advising was aligned with academic "success" and the journey of liberal learning. The author posits that equitable access to liberal learning for flourishing in college requires aligning academic advising pedagogies and practices with learning processes, equity-minded qualitative assessments, and iterative design practices.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who sacrificed their sense of belonging for my sister's and mine.

To my husband, who also made sacrifices to enable my desire for lifelong learning.

To my children, who continue to teach me the meaning of joy.

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I am finishing the program while I complete my thirtieth year as a higher education practitioner in six different roles at Brown University. Brown is also where I completed my

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CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I often begin an annual orientation meeting for the student staff at the advising center I have directed for the past 15 years with this personal story. In 1994, a year after I graduated from college, I started working at my alma mater in an advising office situated near the central building that houses most of the College deanery. During the first weeks in my role, someone came from the deans' office to drop off multiple spiral-bound copies of a fellowship opportunities guide for students. "Please make sure you display these," the messenger told me. When I started reading through the booklet, I thought to myself, why had I never seen this guide before when I was a student? Why did I not know what a fellowship was, and how was I supposed to advise students about these opportunities without this knowledge? Although the internet has vastly improved how institutions disseminate information about programs like fellowships and other high-impact practices, a widespread understanding about their value remains elusive.

My research examined academic advising websites from 20 highly selective liberal arts institutions; my study endeavors to join the conversation about academic advising as a profession and field of inquiry. The current national attention on academic advising as a tool to mitigate equity gaps in college success, and the (mis)understandings about how it can benefit students, contribute to the context of this study. I wished to explore how academic advising was described on the most fundamental level: What is advising's purpose, who is involved in offering the advising services, and how is academic advising organized institutionally? I was also curious to know if the website descriptions aligned academic advising with specific learning outcomes, and if and how advising was explicitly positioned to address institutional equity goals. My study found the websites described academic advisors, college advising programs, and advising's

purpose being for providing holistic support of diverse student populations. The webpages uniformly sought to communicate that all students would experience a sense of agency in their learning process, meaningful social connections, and personal transformation, but the tactical approaches were more challenging to discern. My research considers the cultural context of highly selective liberal arts private colleges/universities, the hidden curriculum, and the challenge of creating opportunities for minoritized students' sense of belonging at elite institutions. I also raise questions about how educators and higher education leaders should measure not only disaggregated completion rates but also if diverse student populations equitably access transformational learning experiences, and how academic advising can optimally support the learning process throughout a student's time in college.

The Boston College Executive EdD in Higher Education's hybrid curriculum (e.g., context courses about higher education, skills-oriented ones about executive leadership, and instruction on data/research methods) along with the program's co-curricular experiences (workshops and residencies) provided me with a structured experience for learning about current issues and trends in higher education, practicing skills associated with leadership and action research, and reflecting on my values and vocation within a supportive community of incredibly talented professionals, thinkers, and compassionate souls. The EdD program allowed me to construct a professional compass for what lies ahead. I am grateful for the opportunity to have delved into scholarship and policy- and practice-oriented discourses about supporting the success of an ever-increasing diverse college student population.

As an administrative leader for three decades in six different roles, I have bridged organizational/institutional priorities with students' perspectives and, more recently, the ideas and ideals of a mission-driven professional and student staff at an advising center. I have

witnessed the professional stress and burnout stemming from the 2008 financial crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and concurrent (inter)national tragedies. The current political climate is particularly polarized and divisive and portends to remain so (Educause, 2020). During my three years as an EdD student, U.S. elite higher education institutions have been on defensive about affirmative action, legacy admissions, their financial aid policies, left-leaning biases, and antisemitism.

Having entered higher education administration at a young age and followed the steppingstones along the way, I could not have imagined that I would find immense joy in advising/mentoring/coaching college students when I started my professional life. During my graduate studies, to my surprise, I encountered a rich literature about academic advising and the student voice. In describing indicators of the quality of student experiences in higher education, Klemenčič (2017) argued that higher education should provide students with the agency, or the capabilities, to influence their learning environment and learning pathways. In addition, Schreiner (2010, 2018) wrote extensively about a "thriving mindset" for college students. Our ideals in U.S. higher education include preparing students for sustainable careers, their agile participation in civic dialogue, developing critical thinking capacities, and flourishing and adapting to life as they set forth. From my professional experience, I know that academic advising, mentoring, and coaching are among the most rewarding careers in higher education because these roles support students in realizing their goals and achieving more than they could have imagined when they started college.

Academic advising should serve a social justice purpose. "Today's gaps in access, participation, and outcomes are yesterday's exclusions and oppressions" (UNESCO, 2021, p. 20). Unfortunately, social justice has been characterized by some as outside the scope of higher education's mission and on a collision course with academic freedom (Paul, 2024). As the U.S.

college population becomes increasingly more diverse, college learning environments need to shift from assimilation- and deficit-oriented paradigms to embracing the assets of these diverse students and meeting them where they are. Equity-minded assessments for institutional improvements and accountability should challenge higher education leaders to prioritize the student's voice, listen to differential and marginalized perspectives and experiences, and act to close gaps in college success and belonging. Scaling a "student-ready" paradigm would mean students actively voice their concerns and perspectives for quality assurance and institutional change (Klemenčič, 2018; Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020). As a U.S. citizen, I found the European Students' Union to be a remarkable example of the student voice at the international policy table in Europe's ongoing Bologna Process. Comparing my perspectives outside my current institutional context to others in the U.S. and internationally has been an unexpected asset of my doctoral education.

I am grateful to have practiced the types of leadership I have been able to embrace and develop over time. I have been praised for knowing and utilizing my strengths and reminding colleagues to align the bottom line with community values and social justice goals. I want to continue to be known for being an educator at my core and an innovator who co-creates opportunities with a values-driven community. I want to continue to focus on mobilizing teams that deliver high-quality and profoundly transformative learning experiences for college students.

Initially skeptical about adopting a corporate-developed strategic model, I have come to appreciate design thinking (related to human-centered design and interaction design). Design-oriented strategy and implementation seek to develop our capacity for empathy and incorporate qualitative evidence for implementing innovations through an iterative process. During my doctoral cohort's last in-person residency, we had the benefit of working with Karen Hold, a co-

author of *Experiencing Design* (Liedtka et al., 2021). She emphasized how leaders and teams interested in innovation must adopt four critical mindsets: building relationships, engaging in self-reflection, scientific inquiry, and "presencing," or imagining new approaches.

The self-assessment tool referenced in *Experiencing Design* (Liedtka et al., 2021) revealed that "reflection" is my most preferred asset/mindset. The tools also suggested that I incorporate more creativity to spark conversations, gain understanding, and work through the discomfort of not knowing; the design-thinking process encourages moving from presenting all facets of complexity to communicating possibilities in a straightforward manner, and trying not to fear failure. Communication across differences and for understanding is challenging in today's rapidly changing and polarized environment. I embrace my reflective capacity and will continue to hone my abilities for conveying complex ideas and possibilities.

At the end of *Experiencing Design,* the authors presented a method for not only doing and experiencing design but also becoming a design-oriented organization. As I ponder the journey ahead, I will continue to lead from where I am and envision my place in leading necessary, justice-oriented organizational change. I am grateful for the experiences I have had during my career: influencing transformation that encourages educators to contribute to the greater good, to act with creativity and individual initiative, and to build trust with students and across a rich diversity of colleagues within organizations of higher learning.

As I was wrapping up my edits for submission, I came across an article in *Inside Higher Ed* about a consortium of universities, learning management system tech companies, and academic publishing houses dedicated to using data for improving advising and the student learning experience (Mowreader, 2024). Digital innovations will likely enable educators and

institutional leaders to improve and scale our practice. I look forward to keeping up with the pace of change and insisting on the inclusion of diverse and minoritized student perspectives.

I feel like you understand who I am and what I'm trying to do.

—ANONYMOUS, *one-on-one advising conversation* (January 2024)

There is no replacement for the interaction of individuals.

—JAMES P. BARBER, *Facilitating the Integration of Learning* (2020)

Accepting accountability to self and community for the consequences of actions taken or not taken can be an elusive concept for a people steeped in the ideology of individualism.

—BARBARA J. LOVE, *Developing a Liberatory Consciousness* (2018)

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION

Problem of the Practice

The national conversation is growing in the United States about the potential for using academic advising to bridge equity gaps in college success (Ezarik et al., 2023; Joslin, 2018; Lawton, 2018; McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022; Postsecondary Value Commission, 2021; Swecker et al., 2013; Whitley et al., 2018) and to create a greater sense of belonging for diverse and minoritized student populations (Guiffrida, 2005; Lee, 2018; Museus, 2021; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Museus et al., 2017; Strayhorn, 2015). Academic advising can teach students how to engage with postsecondary curricula ((Lowenstein, 2020) and connect curricular engagement to career development and lifelong learning (National Academic Advising Association [NACADA], 2024a). However, its tactical use is often misaligned with specific equity-focused goals, undervalued by institutional leaders, and under-resourced for maximum impact (Chatelain, 2018; Jackson et al., 2003; Joslin, 2018; Lawton, 2018; McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022). Moreover, the scholarship on minoritized (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) students' expectations of academic advising (Guiffrida, 2005; Jackson et al., 2003; Lee, 2018; Museus, 2021; Museus & Ravello, 2010) indicates that advising methods and systems require a holistic and justice-oriented approach to address diverse and minoritized students' expectations (Howlett & Rademacher, 2023; Jack, 2019; McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022; Museus, 2021; Whitley et al., 2018).

Academic advisors and institution-wide advising systems of support can play critical roles in translating liberal arts learning goals and culture. When intentionally implementing best practices, advising can create avenues for college access, student engagement, and academic success (NACADA, 2024a, 2024b; Strayhorn, 2015). Some students need help maintaining a

positive outlook or a thriving mindset (Schreiner, 2010, 2018). Faculty and primary-role advisors can advocate for students and support them in navigating challenges and hostile living/learning environments (Lee, 2018). Studies have shown how students with intersectional and minoritized identities attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) grapple with racism (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hernandez-Reyes, 2023), stereotype threat (Steele, 2010), and isolation rather than a sense of belonging (Jack, 2019; Strayhorn, 2019). Instead of expecting students to surmount these obstacles with minimal support, institutions can further their commitment to equity, inclusion, and belonging by contributing to the national discourse about their collective hope for students—and, by doing so, seeing the assets inherent in students' diversity and the promise of the ideals of learning in college. Especially for students who experience academic and personal setbacks, institutional leaders must prioritize evidence-based pedagogies, practices, and interventions to help mitigate difficulties, support students' success, and provide diversified opportunities and support for transformative learning.

Purpose of Study

Students expect to be oriented to the college learning environment. Academic affairs leaders and practitioners have been increasingly attentive to the diversity of students who may be unfamiliar with college culture and the potential effectiveness and benefits of academic advising (Ezarik et al., 2023; McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022; Thomas & McFarlane, 2018; Troxel et al., 2021; Whitley et al., 2018). Delineating the role of and learning goals for academic advising and its campus resources as described on institutional websites can help students (and advisors) proactively access campus services, individualized support, and learning opportunities such as high-impact practices and faculty relationships (Finley & McNair, 2013; Joslin, 2018; Kuh, 2008b; Lawton, 2018; Threlfall, 2022; Whitley et al., 2018; Zahneis, 2023).

This study analyzes institutional websites and creates a thematic inventory of their content that contains the purpose, strategies, and desired outcomes of undergraduate academic advising at 20 highly selective, four-year liberal arts institutions that are members of the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE). The research considers how websites indicate the structure and resource commitments for academic advising practices. It also addresses how these elements (or their absence) potentially affect institutional messages about the inclusion of and support for diverse student populations. This research makes visible the actors—faculty, advising deans and other professional staff, peer advisors, third-party organizations, and technologies—involved in academic advising processes for ensuring access to learning (Barber, 2020), a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2019), and thriving in college (Schreiner, 2010, 2018). Additionally, this study explores website content about specific methods and resources for how academic advising supports institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals.

Online information and other digital media functions are critical institutional communication tools (Anctil, 2008; Page et al., 2023; Rowan-Keyon et al., 2018). Publicly facing institutional websites do not reveal how students and advisors (users) experience academic advising and support. Rather, these websites describe and document what academic advising is, who is involved, and how advising/advisors can help students be successful and navigate learning and co-curricular opportunities. This research highlights how website communications convey implicit or explicit messages about learning outcomes or learning as a process. The data analysis also points to systemic efforts to engage with students individually or by acknowledging them as part of an identity-based cohort/community.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do highly selective, four-year, private liberal arts institutions in the United States present the purposes and goals of academic advising on their websites? How do the websites delineate the structure and resources for academic advising?

RQ2: According to their websites, do these institutions include academic services and support for diverse and minoritized student populations? If so, what enhanced academic assistance and support do these colleges and universities offer?

This study considers the national dialogue about inequities in U.S. higher education and how academic advising is discussed as helping promote student success. Chapter 1 outlines the evolving discourse about the goals for academic advising and its pedagogical frameworks. It also examines how advising philosophically or tactically fosters student transformation and liberal learning outcomes and how institutions narrate assurances of liberal learning outcomes' connection to personal social mobility. In Chapter 2, the "site" of the study—academic advising websites—serves as a location not only to outline the facets of academic advising but also to convey institutional values and promises to provide transformative learning experiences. This research aims to sharpen higher education's collective understanding of academic advising, how it operates, and how institutions view it as a pedagogical tool for which all members of the diverse student community can benefit. In the final chapter, I make the case for the alignment of liberal learning with practices that foster the integration of learning (Barber, 2020), coordinated academic advising systems, and the availability of and need for qualitative feedback and assessment.

Equity Frameworks for Postsecondary Education

Equity concerns for U.S. higher education include low rates of college completion and differentials in completion rates by racial/ethnic groups (Postsecondary Value Commission, 2021). Other pertinent issues entail students' academic readiness (Page & Clayton, 2021), high college debt, and socioeconomic inequality (Cahalan et al., 2022). Though the public gives credence to college completion for improving social mobility, it has questioned and scrutinized the long-term effects of college on individual well-being and for enhancing civic life and participation (Gallup, 2023). Worldwide, leaders have called for a recommitment to higher education not only for accessing personal social mobility but also for societal flourishing and as a public good (Bok, 2022; Cahalan et al., 2022; Educause, 2020; Marginson, 2016; Postsecondary Value Commission, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

Current Equity Gaps in Higher Education

Though there have been declines in the percentages of high school students who would be first-generation college during the past 30 years, over 70% of secondary school students from certain federally-recognized racial groups—U.S. Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic/Latinx—have the potential to be first-generation college-bound, as compared to 30% of Asian and 46% of White/Caucasian American high school students (Cahalan et al., 2022). Students of color will soon be half of all high school graduates in the United States (Educause, 2020).

Yet student completion rates at four-year postsecondary institutions in fall 2010 differed significantly by race and socioeconomic status: while 74% of Asian students, 64% of White students, and 60% of bi- or multi-racial students completed college in six years, 54% of Hispanic, 51% of Pacific Islander, 40% of Black, and 39% of American Indian/Alaskan Native

students finished college in the same period (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). The 2015–16 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study reported that 47% of Pell Grant/low-income students at four-year public institutions and 59% of this group at four-year private nonprofit institutions completed in six years (Postsecondary Value Commission, p. 10). In 2018–19, 13% of students from the lowest socioeconomic quartile completed a bachelor's degree in six years, compared with 62% of students in the highest quartile (Cahalan et al., 2022). Low-income students face barriers related to affordability, access to information about applying to college, and academic preparation (Page & Clayton, 2016).

Despite equity gaps in college completion rates by racial/ethnic group and socioeconomic status, the June 2023 ruling on using race in college admissions changed the course of the decades-long debate about affirmative action in higher education (Howe, 2023; *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College,* 2022). Additionally, leaders of PWIs have reckoned with addressing campus racism (Cole & Harper, 2017; Harper & Hurtado, 2007) and mitigating alienating learning environments (Jack, 2019) to culturally positive ones (Harper, 2009; Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Hernandez-Reyes, 2023; Strayhorn, 2015). Many low-income students need resources to cover basic needs and the overall cost of attendance (Goldrick-Rab, 2023; Jack, 2019; Soria et al., 2020). Despite these realities, DEI priorities in U.S. higher education have received intense scrutiny among state legislatures and the public (Confessore, 2024).

Stark differences in college access and completion rates between racial categories and socioeconomic status have inspired recommitments to equity through the awareness of efforts to foster welcoming and engaging learning environments (Barber, 2020; McNair et al., 2022; Museus, 2021; Whitley et al., 2018). When envisioning a future for U.S. postsecondary

education, an equity-focused framework de-emphasizes merit-based and consumer-oriented models, and higher education is viewed as a human right that contributes to individual flourishing and serving a common good (Cahalan et al., 2022; Educause, 2020; Marginson, 2016; UNESCO, 2021).

Institutional Accountability for Equity

Considering the college population's growing racial and socioeconomic diversity, many researchers have focused on understanding and improving the learning environment and experience. Widely held understandings of concepts such as a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2019), the "hidden" advice students need for college success (Chatlain, 2018; Jack, 2019; Jack & Black, 2022), and stereotype threat (Steele, 2010) can enhance the theory and practice of student development (Astin, 1970) and student involvement (Astin, 1999). Concerns about poor mental health among adolescents and college students (Gallup, Inc. & Lumina Foundation, 2023; National Council on Disability, 2017) add to the call for shifting from "college-ready" paradigms and programs to "student-ready" institutional mindsets and practices (McNair et al., 2022). Rather than diluting the focus on race, the 2023 Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's racial equity strategic plan argued that high education institutions must orient themselves to serving and educating the "whole student" and work across institutional constituencies to "advance racial equity" (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, 2023, p. 24).

Liberal Learning Outcomes and Higher Education's Value

Liberal education, without an obvious extrinsic value for those unfamiliar with its benefits, requires a translation of its aims and discernable evidence that it prepares students for life after college (Roche, 2013). Institutional leaders and educators are addressing an imperative

to more concretely describe and account for liberal learning outcomes (AAC&U, 2009; Bok, 2022). Institutions must also manage rising costs and concerns about financial aid, participate in the competition for students, and balance broadly stated learning goals with concrete examples of how liberal learning leads to career readiness and other forms of return on investment (National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2021). Students and their families are centrally concerned about the college's return on investment proposition; for example, business is the number one college major in the United States (NCES, 2021), and an annual CIRP freshman study found that 76.7% of students from middle-income families reported some or significant concerns about finances (Cooperative Institutional Research Program at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, 2020). In the competition to attract students, undergraduate institutions are under pressure to articulate outcomes for multiple audiences—prospective and current students, families, accreditors, and a discerning public (Chang & Osborn, 2005; Chirikov, 2016; Ewell, 2009).

Inherent in liberal education's philosophy and design is a belief in and some evidence for the intrinsic value of the curriculum and how it develops students' general critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Barber, 2020; Pascarella & Blaich, 2013). Moreover, the college living and learning environment at liberal arts schools, in its ideal, presents an opportunity for undergraduates to interact with a variety of students, faculty, and others in the classroom during co-curricular or other social experiences for academic enrichment and personal growth (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kilgo et al., 2015; Kuh, 2008a, 2008b; Light, 2001; Pascarella & Blaich, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In addition to a curriculum for achieving liberal learning goals, studies support the claim that liberal education and college experiences can prepare students for fulfilling careers, lifelong learning, and civic engagement (AAC&U, 2009; Barber, 2020; Bok,

2022; Finley & McNair, 2013; Pascarella & Blaich, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Puroway, 2016).

Colleges play a crucial role in advising about career pathways, given the lack of career development curricula and guidance counseling in public high schools at both ends of the socioeconomic spectrum (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2011). Despite emphasizing the transferrable skills gained in college, educators should more persuasively convince students, their families, and the public that learning across disciplines aids in complex thinking, critical analysis capacities, and unique preparation for uncertain futures (Barber, 2020; Bok, 2022). Unsurprisingly, even the most selective institutions promote its national rankings (Chang et al., 2005; Chirikov, 2016) and aim to convince multiple audiences of the causal relationship between college learning and prospects for career/social mobility (AAC&U, 2009; NACE, 2021).

Institutions promote the roles of academic advising professionals, programs, and systems to translate the college learning experience and connect students to resources intended to help students succeed (NACADA, 2024b), and recommendations have emerged recently for higher education leaders to focus on academic advising to mitigate equity gaps in completion (Postsecondary Value Commission, 2021). Surveys of students (Ezarik et al., 2023) and first-generation college-focused campus administrators (Whitley et al., 2018) showed that students and practitioners view academic advising as important, if not essential, to the college completion and experience puzzle. The increasing interest in academic advising and how institutions deploy it has yielded institutional successes at some public four-year institutions and community colleges (McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022; University of Florida, 2023).

College Websites and Digital Communications

Academic advising's role in mitigating equity gaps and implementing the practice depends on many contextual factors, including curriculum type (i.e., four-year liberal arts colleges, pre-professional degree programs, community colleges), expectations for how instructional faculty participate in advising, and resource allocations for primary-role advisors and programming. Academic advising websites can provide information about how institutions organize their approaches and what students can expect from advisors and advising programs. Although websites are only one component of the overall advising system, they represent the institution's voice and assume that readers will learn something from the website content and about campus operations and culture (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2018).

Institutions rely upon official communication vehicles for mission-driven and market-driven trust-building with multiple stakeholders (Anctil, 2008). Prior research about postsecondary admissions hard-copy viewbooks have led to studies about how admissions websites provide first impressions of the school and cost and financial aid information; websites are critical marketing tools for prospective students and their families while providing a medium for outlining the school's overall mission and values, strategic goals, and progress toward priorities (Anctil, 2008; Saichaie & Morphew, 2014). One study determined the website content frequency of information about admissions processes, faculty and academic programs, and campus tour information at 60 "top-tier" and 60 "lowest-tier" colleges ranked by *US News and World Report*. Klassen (2002) found that the top-tier institutions more frequently featured information about campus tours and their academic resources than the lowest-tier schools. Their study also described website typologies (e.g., Basic, Reactive, Accountable, Proactive, and Partnership types) that distinguished the sites' communication approaches (Klassen, 2002).

Another study used a content analysis approach to describe how 13 colleges in the southeastern United States used their websites to communicate information intended for first-generation college students (FGCS) and how the website content facilitated access to first-generation college-specific resources. Hodge et al. (2020) used a rubric that categorized the sites that delineated 1) how FGCS can access services, 2) acknowledged FGCS but not how to access services, and 3) contained no direct mention of FGCS. The results revealed differences between these factors on institutions' websites; all but two defined FGCS on their sites, and only one school clearly described pathways to college success, accessing peer support, information about students' enrollment status, and financial advising and support. The authors also found that the schools did not feature FGCS support services on their Home, About, or Financial Aid pages. Furthermore, schools disseminated information for this student population through non-digital means such as pre-orientation and orientation programs (Hodge et al., 2020). Though college students may use social media and texting apps more readily than email website communication platforms, FGCS have been known to access campus technologies for building relationships and increasing their knowledge of campus culture and resources (Rowan-Keyon et al., 2018).

Interaction Design (User Interface/User Experience [UI/UX])

My research cannot determine how users (i.e., prospective and current students, internal community members, and the public) navigate or evaluate the effectiveness of institutional academic advising websites based on sites' design or dialogic capabilities. However, a content analysis can decipher the sites' design architecture, website content (text, images, videos), navigation, and user functionalities as indicators of institutional decisions about the intended audiences and information deemed essential for inclusion (or exclusion). While my analysis did

not focus primarily on design choices per se, the data units used for the study's analysis and thematic groupings are a function of common principles and techniques in designing websites.

Interaction design is an industry-developed practice that influences product development, the organization of services and institutional systems, and how websites are designed for specific goals and audiences ("users"). Website industry experts are principally interested in understanding their users and anticipating how to engage them: "Interaction designers strive to create *meaningful relationships between people and the products and services that they use***,** from computers to mobile devices to appliances and beyond" (UX Booth Editorial Team, 2018, para. 3, emphasis added). Web designers use a "goal-driven design" approach that "focuses first and foremost on satisfying specific needs and desires of the end-user, as opposed to older methods of design, which focused on what capabilities were available on the technology side of things" (UX Booth Editorial Team, 2018, para. 7). Best practices in interaction design aim to adopt the user's language and reduce the amount of irrelevant content to maximize the user's engagement and experience with the website (Nielsen, 2020). As part of the design process, designers attempt to create user personas to help them achieve the most effective user experience (Cooper & Reimann, 2003).

Given UI/UX industry practices, it should follow that well-resourced and highly selective colleges and universities intentionally design their websites according to how institutions want to engage with viewers from multiple audiences. Websites give voice to the institution. Current students who were once prospective ones likely visited their school's website as applicants; college admission pages and homepages also promote digital engagement with information about deadlines and stories about current students and their experiences and feelings about the school through social media such as group chat apps, Instagram, and YouTube. While this study cannot

discern if and how current students and other school community members use the institution's site, I can analyze the choices made about communication—one-way and two-way—with intended audiences or, in this instance, current students and faculty advisors.

A discourse within the fields associated with interaction design (e.g., human-computer interaction, design engineering and industrial design, design thinking, human-centered design) references inclusive and universal design approaches for which designers in their processes can and should design for all potential users. At first, the logic undergirding support for digital or technology-based universal design seems to mirror the principles of Universal Design for Learning in K-12 and higher education, which are chiefly concerned with pedagogies that begin with inclusive aims and address the needs of learners from differing physical and learning abilities (CAST, Inc. 2018, 2024; National Education Association, 2024). However, scholar-activist Costanza-Chock (2020) contended that in the design practice realm, the designers, design processes, and products or outcomes of universal design approaches often privilege members of predominant cultures and therefore exclude users with marginalized, minoritized, and intersectional identities. This debate within the interaction design and technology sphere is salient for understanding higher education websites, digital communications, and other technologies, and I will reference these concepts when discussing my findings, implications for practice, and recommendations.

Academic Advising Discourses

A 1991 literature review of how faculty mentoring impacts college success began with the concern for the lack of a widely understood definition of mentoring in higher education (Jacobi, 1991). Academic advising is challenged with a similar phenomenon (McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022). Moreover, standardizing best practices for academic advising is difficult because

of institutional variances in curricular goals and contexts. Nonetheless, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), based at the University of Kansas, has convened scholars and practitioners across institutions and conveyed a cohesive about understanding of the core concepts, values, and competencies for academic advising since the 1970s. The field has debated its philosophical constructs and practical approaches for several years.

Origins of Typology

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, U.S. higher education underwent several paradigm shifts, including student activism arguing for co-education, racial integration, and the need to diversify college curricula and pedagogy. Astin's theory of college student involvement (1970, 1999)—the relationship between student inputs, college experiences, and student outputs—emerged alongside Chickering's (1969) theory of student identity development. Then, Crookston's (1972) "developmental academic advising" concept of advising as a form of teaching (contrasting with individual advisors using prescriptive or intrusive approaches) influenced the practice and scholarly discourse for decades. Years later, Chickering (1994) wrote, "[T]he fundamental purpose of academic advising is to help students become effective agents of their own lifelong learning and personal development… Our relationships with students… all should aim to increase their capacity to take charge of their existence" (p. 50). During this period, developmental academic advising assumed that instructional faculty were in the advising role.

Professionalization

At Johns Hopkins University, advisors helped students with choosing elective coursework as early as the 1870s and 1880s (Shaffer et al., 2010). But academic advising as a professional practice followed the publication of Chickering's (1969), Astin's (1970), and

Crookston's (1972) theories about college student development. The first national conference on academic advising took place in 1977, and the National Academic Advising Association was established in 1979 (Shaffer et al., 2010). NACADA has served as a primary academic advising professional organization that shares academic advising approaches, encourages research, and provides training. However, as late in 2009, former NACADA leaders questioned whether academic advising qualified as a field of inquiry or met the standards of a profession with a shared scholarship and skills (Shaffer et al., 2010). Nevertheless, NACADA continues to host national and regional conferences and is home to a peer-reviewed journal. The organization's current framework for the field includes a curriculum, pedagogy, and practice to support specific student learning outcomes (NACADA, 2024a):

- Craft a coherent educational plan based on assessment of abilities, aspirations, interests, and values.
- Use complex information from various sources to set goals, reach decisions, and achieve those goals.
- Assume responsibility for meeting academic program requirements.
- Articulate the meaning of higher education and the intent of the institution's curriculum.
- Cultivate the intellectual habits that lead to a lifetime of learning.
- Behave as citizens who engage in the wider world around them. (Para. 9)

NACADA members and supporters have subscribed to linking academic advising to students' achievement of these learning outcomes, which include students' personal goals, degree completion, lifelong learning, and citizenship; noticeably absent is the mention of career-oriented goals. Additionally, NACADA has delineated core competencies for primary-role advisors, faculty academic advisors, and administrators grouped into three areas—1) conceptual

understanding of the advisor's role and the advising practice, 2) mastery of institutional information and policies, and 3) skills for building student relationships (NACADA, 2024d).

Faculty as Advisors

Some academic advising handbooks have described academic advising as an institutionally supported process for facilitating a one-on-one relationship between the student and the (faculty) advisor for meeting a student's academic, career, and personal goals. This approach described a dynamic partnership between the student and advisor, reciprocal contributions to this relationship, and the establishment of trust (Grites, 2013).

One academic advising book chapter analyzed academic advising approaches at 20 "institutionally distinctive" schools. The 2005 Documenting Effective Educational Practices study included schools with higher than predicted graduation rates and scores, as reported in the National Survey of Student Engagement (Kuh, 2008a). Its five principles for academic advising for student success included possessing a philosophy for seeing every student's potential. Advising was described as a back-and-forth exchange within an advising network. The authors expected students to be involved in mapping out their pathways to college success. The advisor-advisee interaction was written as a unique opportunity for advisors to connect students to resources, engage in meaningful conversations, and intervene when students need help. The chapter described how advising existed within its institution's cultural context, requiring its unique philosophical underpinnings, institutional promotion incentives, resources, and coordinated system and programs. This academic advising paradigm relies on a partnership in which both advisor and advisee actively participate. It assumes the advisor is directly tied to the educational experience (faculty instructors) and acknowledges their advising role as one of many within a larger college community.

In essence, the effective advising relies on students' participation in the process. Astin's (1999) theory of college student involvement, which argues for understanding college involvement linked to individual students' motivations, is contextualized within a framework of three dominant college/institutional pedagogies: 1) as emerging from academic subject expertise, 2) tied to resources the institution offers, and 3) focusing on students' "individualized" motives and goals, whether they be conscious or soon-to-be discovered. In the academic advising field, supporting "student development" has remained a contested concept; during the 1990s and 2000s, faculty advisors debated the differences between academic advising and advising for student development, or counseling students.

Academic Advising and Liberal Learning. As a faculty member in the School of Education at Harvard, Richard Light (2001) wrote an essay that served as the foundation for his book *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*. Light discussed academic advising as an endeavor focused not on course selection or critical reflection but on introducing students to the "life of the University." He described interactions with his advisees that addressed more practical matters, such as asking his advisees to keep time management logs for his review. Light also recounted a time when he was a graduate student when his advisor asked him to edit one of his advisor's research papers, which in hindsight he understood was an approach to mentor him while support the development of Light's writing. Light then connected the memory to how advisors could do the same to support students in developing their writing skills. He further recalled suggesting that one of his advisees, a Pacific Islander, join the marching band to achieve social belonging; when the student said they didn't play an instrument, Light suggested they ask to play percussion. These anecdotal suggestions, he argued, should become "policy solutions" that enable the development of the advising relationship and academic success.

Individualized advising conversations for student development require the investment of time and a mindset for advising students beyond course enrollment and selecting a major. In seeking to clarify the teaching function of academic advising, Lowenstein (2020) drew parallels between good teaching and good advising about the choices within the college curriculum in an article first published in 2005. Academic advising should help students see the parts of the whole of the curriculum, modes of intellectual thought, interrelationships between the disciplines, and transferable skills gained from formal study. In other words, academic advising should help students make logical curricular choices, derive meaning from deepening learning experiences, and structure their academic progress. Lowenstein (2020) argued that academic advisors foster a relationship primarily for rational conversations about educational decisions and learning, not career or personal growth, as expressed in the original and predominant developmental academic advising paradigm.

Considering the faculty's primary role, many faculty advisors might agree that personal development should not be part of their responsibilities and that professional counselors work with students on "development." This view frames personal growth and development solely within a social psychological construct, not an intellectual development paradigm. In studying the impacts of the postsecondary experience, Baxter Magolda (2009) delineated the binary framework researchers imposed in analyzing personal "choices" or "context" (p. 621) and cognitive learning versus student development. The emerging discourse demonstrated the tension between how to advise for academic learning versus personal development. Hemwall and Trachte (1999) resoundingly disputed the "developmental" aspect of academic advising and the role of faculty academic advisors in facilitating the personal element of students' needs. They emphasized Crookston's (1972) explanation of advising as a form of teaching. Still, they steered

Crookston's concept from psychological development to "rational processes, environmental and personal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" in supporting students in planning for and leading self-fulfilling lives. They discussed the "strain" between faculty and student affairs personnel and declared "developmental" advising to be uncomfortable for faculty (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, pp. 6–7).

Instead, Hemwall and Trachte (1999) called for a "new direction" in academic advising grounded in Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's reflection and action framework, one that liberates oppressed individuals and proposes education to "transform the world" (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, p. 8). They argued that this type of critical reflection more naturally matches the academic advising endeavor in the context of liberal education. "This emphasis on change, that is, learning, rather than personal development, makes clear that self-transformation (making meaning of the world to transform it), not self-actualization (primarily identifying individual self-development), is the most important goal of [academic advising] praxis" (p. 9). The authors distinguished the faculty role in advising college students as closely aligned with their teaching role for facilitating rational or cognitive development; emotional or personal development should occur separately and in other interactions or settings. Put simply, these authors viewed academic learning and personal development as distinctive processes and enterprises.

In another article, Hemwall and Trachte (2005) contended that academic advising is a learning enterprise, reasserting that the "development of the self is an end in itself and quite apart from the curriculum" (p. 74). However, cultural studies educators/scholars and others might disagree (Museus, 2021). Hemwall and Trachte (2005) subscribed to academic advising as an ongoing exchange to help students make choices and learn how to learn. Reminiscent of findings from the Wabash National Study on Liberal Arts Education (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013), they

said advising should help students achieve “higher-order thinking skills” by linking conversations about these skills and student learning goals with the mission of the college—namely, the mission of a liberal arts curriculum in this case. Hemwall and Trachte (2005) also referred to “development” as something solely about the “self” and, in a sense, selfishness. Calling advisors “guides,” they encouraged advisors, like teachers, to scaffold learning about the liberal arts (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005, p. 80).

Also writing on advising and personal liberation, Puroway (2016) described an advising dynamic during one-on-one appointments where advisors elicit reflections, listen for feelings of alienation when students express their discoveries of oppression in their studies, and thus begin to help students see themselves as “historical beings” (p. 5). The author assumed the reader’s knowledge of Freire’s liberation pedagogy; advising is a “political” act supporting students in clarifying their values (Puroway, 2016, p. 9). Academic advisors and students, however, may or may not see themselves in this paradigm. For those who do, this view of academic advising in one-on-one conversations necessitates an established relationship and trust; discussions about oppression and students’ values need to conjure up developmental and self-actualization processes that must, for the student, feel personal.

The academic advising typologies described in this period positioned faculty advisors for mentoring relationships (Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, 2023). Academic advising scholars and practitioners have disagreed about the similarities and differences between academic advising and faculty mentoring (Barber, 2020; Howlett & Rademacher, 2023); this comparison will be discussed at length in Chapters 2 and 3.

Evolving Language and Advising Typologies

While a binary between logical learning processes and personal/student development took hold in the discourse about the role and goal of academic advising, other frameworks for academic advising praxis emerged over time. Approaches called "strengths-based" (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005) and "appreciative advising" (Bloom et al., 2008) require advisors to elicit student assets. Strengths-based advising takes from the Clifton Strengths model developed in the business industry: it guides students in identifying their top five strengths from a list of 34 themes and considering these strengths in the student context. Schreiner and Anderson (2005) argued that this model shifts the focus away from fixing deficits to instead using a student's identified five strengths to aid in approaching new situations and tackling challenges in academic areas.

One study analyzed the strengths-based advising approach used with first-year students (Soria et al., 2017). The study aimed to correlate strengths-based advising conversations and a positive impact on its students; additionally, a group of advisors took part in focus group discussions. Participants included 1,228 first-year students from a single institution. The sample included 65.1% female/34.9% male students and 21% Pell Grant recipients. Over half of the sample had at least one strengths-based advising conversation. Participants with at least one strengths-based advising conversation as a first-year student reported "significantly higher engagement" by 8.2%. This advising approach also significantly affected academic engagement, with lesser impacts on retention and four-year graduation rates. In the student survey, 88% reported that the strengths-based advising conversation(s) had somewhat or a substantial impact on choosing their major, and 82.6% said it had influenced their career path. Advisors (n = 21) in the focus groups described the advising approach as a method for relationship-building and developing their skills as advisors.

Researchers have discussed advising's role for helping students manage transitions and in making critical transitions, such as choosing a major in the sophomore year (Schreiner, 2018; Tobolowsky, 2008). More recently, academic coaching has emerged as a practice sometimes viewed as a subcategory of academic advising support or as distinctive from academic advising entirely. Drawing from the life coaching practice in the business sector, professional and peer coaching offers asset-based support for achieving positive educational outcomes. Academic coaching, being individualized and personalized, is cited as ideal for teaching students about metacognition skills (McGuire, 2015) and for cohorts such as FGCS, international students, STEM-focused students, and students with learning differences (Howlett & Rademacher, 2023).

Satisfaction Studies and Expectations of Advising

Though self-satisfaction studies do not directly describe the causal impact of academic advising on students, they highlight expectations and, therefore, the delivery and usage of services. Smith and Allen (2006) used 12 advising functions to determine the importance of and student satisfaction with academic advising at a single, urban doctoral research institution. Two thousand one hundred ninety-three students participated in the study, and the authors discussed the increasing diversity of their student body; men, Asian Americans, and new students were underrepresented in the sample, and Pell Grant recipients were slightly overrepresented.

Accurate Information was rated highest for the importance of and satisfaction with academic advising. *Out of Class Connect* ("advising that assists students with choosing out-of-class activities… that connect their academic, career, and life goals," Smith & Allen, 2006, p. 59) was rated lowest in importance and satisfaction. The authors made a case for student satisfaction with prescriptive advising; developmental advising functions were in the middle of the rankings. Overall, the self-determined *importance* ratings differed significantly by gender,

financial need, and class year, but not in terms of *satisfaction.* However, students of color reported fewer satisfaction ratings overall than their white peers. Smith and Allen (2006) noted the study's limitations in providing a nuanced understanding of how these differences manifested in students' responses.

The same authors subsequently studied faculty satisfaction with advising by using the same 12 aspects of academic advising on a scale of importance, responsibility, and satisfaction (Allen & Smith, 2008). They cited a 2003/2004 study showing that 75–90% of academic advising is done by faculty (Allen & Smith, 2008, p. 397); the 2003 study also revealed that only 31% of institutions recognized or rewarded faculty for academic advising. The 171 faculty participants in the Allen and Smith's 2008 study were from a doctoral research-intensive public university, representing 23.3% of the target population of faculty .50 FTE or higher. That institution had a 25,000-student enrollment with "many students from historically underrepresented groups represented" (Allen & Smith, 2008, p. 400). White faculty made up most of the sample (78.4%).

Of the 12 academic advising functions listed in Allen & Smith's (2008) study, faculty rated *Accurate Information, Overall Connect* ("academic advising that helps undergraduate students connect their academic, career, and life goals," Allen & Smith, 2008, p. 402), *Major Connect,* and *Referral Academic* as the essential responsibilities for their academic advising role. These aspects' *Importance* ratings correlated with their *Responsibility* ratings. Participants also expressed the highest satisfaction with their role's *Accurate Information, Overall Connect,* and *Major Connect* aspects. The developmental, academic advising aspects—building relationships, one-on-one conversations for critical reflection, and strengths-based advising are noted in this study as *Out of Class Connect, How Things Work, Know as an Individual,* and *Share Responsibility* (Allen & Smith, 2008, p. 402); these aspects did not score highly on any faculty

measures: importance of, responsibility for, or satisfaction with academic advising. The authors questioned whether this finding was a function of how instructor participants viewed their role as faculty or if participants felt less responsible because they thought they were less qualified to perform these aspects of advising.

Mottarella et al. (2004) empirically investigated these factors using NACADA's Academic Advising Inventory (2020) to gain a qualitative understanding of what students value about academic advising. The study looked for preferences across five dimensions: advising approach, emotional nature, depth of relationship, the impact of advisor variables (peer, faculty, professional), and gender. The authors created 48 fictitious advising scenarios for students to consider. Four hundred sixty-eight students at a large southeastern university participated in the study; the sample was 71.8% White. Students spent about 90 minutes participating in the study and reviewing the scenarios. Results reflected students' perceived importance of the depth of the advising relationship. Female professional advisors were seen as warm and supportive; students across personality types preferred "warm and supportive advising." Non-White and non-traditional-age students reported less supportive advising experiences. Yet the advising which students in the study preferred, whether "prescriptive" or "developmental," tended to be the same as the advising experiences they had received. In other words, participants favored pleasant advising experiences and were not inclined to be satisfied with different types of advising experiences, even if the scenarios described positive outcomes.

Surveys about academic advising from the National Survey of Student Engagement have shown that many students want an academic advising experience that foregrounds listening, respect, and care (NSSE, 2020a, 2020b). However, a 2023 survey of 3,000 students from 128 universities and community colleges found that only 55% of the sample received advice about courses and requirements for graduation, and only two in five students were required to meet

with their assigned academic advisor (Ezarik et al., 2023). To recenter developmental advising and intentionally integrate positive psychology theory, Schreiner (2010) argued for cultivating a "thriving mindset" that connects college success with "psychological engagement" and "educationally productive behaviors" (p. 12). Schreiner (2018) applied the thriving concept to advising sophomore students to address sophomore slump and transitions in academic development, decision making, personal relationships, self-efficacy, and career development. The author described barriers to sophomore success, including academic difficulties, lack of motivation, identity development, indecision about choices, and a lack of belonging. Schreiner (2018) also made the case for "pathways to thriving," which include "Major Certainty," "Campus Involvement," "Student-Faculty Interaction," "Spirituality," "Institutional Integrity," and "Sense of Community: membership, ownership, relationship, partnership" (Schreiner, 2018, p. 16). She additionally cited institutional barriers, including a lack of attention to sophomores, lack of opportunities for faculty connection before declaring a major, not focusing advising discussions on meaning and purpose, and "campus systems and policies that hinder thriving among marginalized students, as well as sophomores in general" (Schreiner, 2018, p. 11). As a side note, the author referenced obstacles that sophomores with "marginalized identities" face with campus involvement, citing her observations of Hispanic commuter students and Black students (Schreiner, 2018, p. 13); she further acknowledged alienating experiences of students of color related to compositional diversity and hostile racial climates.

Qualitative Understandings of Minoritized Students' Expectations

Research on the impact of and satisfaction with academic advising suggests students have different expectations across identity groups. These studies provide more nuanced understandings of developmental academic advising, advising as a form of teaching, and academic advising praxis. Returning to the origins of the discourse—developmentally oriented

approaches, in contrast to prescriptive or intrusive advising (for urgent student situations)—some scholars have added to the developmental advising paradigm by centering the experiences and perspectives of minoritized/historically underrepresented populations in higher education.

The "culturally engaging advising" framework describes how college educators can "cultivate environments in which diverse populations can thrive (Museus, 2021, p. 26). In a study comprising 1,000 interviews and 20,000 research respondents at the National Institute for Transformation and Equity (2021), college students from minoritized populations attributed their successes to having a mentor's support. The findings also described academic advisors who helped students understand political and social problems in their communities and provided pathways for civic engagement with these communities. Culturally responsive advisors play a role in constructing learning environments and connecting students to culturally relevant learning opportunities. Respondents of color described advisors as people who may have more "intimate knowledge" of students' identities; they may have struggled as students themselves, thus possessing knowledge about how to cope with barriers (personal and environmental). Considering these perspectives, Museus (2021) critiqued institutions that value transactional, high-volume advising over these relational approaches.

An earlier study directly considered the question of academic advising for encouraging college success for students of color at PWIs (Museus & Ravello, 2010). The authors met with 31 students of color from colleges with a high student-of-color graduation rate close to their White peers. The authors found the students wanted academic advisors who were "humanized" (p. 53) in terms of being seen as individuals beyond their staff role and someone who cared about students' overall success. The participants also favored a "multifaceted" or "holistic" approach (p. 54), or advisors who demonstrated an awareness that their problems and concerns rarely

merged in one area (academic or personal). Also, the participants preferred “proactive” (pp. 54–55) advising (e.g., intrusive advising); they favored timely interventions when they needed support.

Nineteen “high achieving” African American students were interviewed for another qualitative study exploring the advising relationships among Black students at a predominantly White research institution of 11,000 students; African American students composed 7.5% of the population (Guiffrida, 2005). The participants shared that the “vast majority” of the participants’ “student-centered faculty” were African American (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 707). The students described how these faculty taught inclusive curricula, served as role models, did not stereotype them, and went “above and beyond” (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 708). These instructors participated in developmental and academic advising or conversations with students about their career, educational, and personal goals. In addition to meeting their expectations for discussing course selection and planning courses of study, the faculty members listened to students’ professional “fears, dreams, and goals” (Guiffrida, 2005, p. 708). The students desired inclusive academic and personal advising and regular meetings to monitor their progress (proactive/intrusive advising). The students also described how faculty served as advocates to help them succeed.

College retention and persistence studies have highlighted the critical role of academic advising for FGCS (Swecker et al., 2013; University of South Florida, 2023; Whitey et al., 2018). In another qualitative study, Jackson et al. (2003) interviewed 15 Native American students at five different four-year colleges in the southwest United States. The study aimed to “articulate academically successful Native American college students’ perceptions of the factors that facilitated and detracted from their efforts to graduate from college” (Jackson et al., 2003, pp. 550–551). Six “surface themes’’ from the conversations were the centrality of family and

their support; the desire for structured support at school; the importance of faculty/staff warmth (individuals who expressed care); structured exposure to college pathways and vocations; their development of independence and assertiveness; and a need for spirituality. Three "deep themes'' from their conversations surfaced student encounters with prejudice/racism—both passive and active experiences of them (in class or other discussions about history/culture)—and feelings of isolation. The students experienced gaps in their college education and nonlinear pathways to completion. They also reflected on the dissonances between their home culture and college success. Jackson et al., (2003) encouraged institution-level commitments to *advising* for addressing loneliness, peer pressure, bi-cultural identity formation, and racism. The authors also suggested mentoring programs and support for providing structured relationships with faculty/staff. Jack's (2019) interviews with over 100 students at a highly selective college from various racial and socioeconomic intersectional backgrounds confirm the need for programs and support to help students from under-resourced high schools and communities not only understand the importance of attending office hours but also feel confident in approaching and developing relationships with advisors (Jack, 2019).

Another author argued for advisors serving as advocates for Black students at PWIs by using critical race theory to delineate "the ways academic advisors can work with Black students attending PWIs and place a specific focus on the experiences of racialized oppression, power, and privilege within PWIs into a theory-to-praxis [advising] model" (Lee, 2018, p. 77). The author recommended that advisors promote "micro affirmations" and support the development of "counter spaces" (Lee, 2018, p. 82)—campus organizations, culturally specific rooms, and social networks to mitigate isolation and foster a sense of belonging and affirmation in residence halls, social and identity centers, and other areas on campus. Other scholars (Harper, 2013; Jack, 2019;

Tatum, 2017) writing about Black students at PWIs have discussed the tangible experience of being in PWI learning and social spaces. Certain authors caution against advising spaces "that re-inscribe narrow definitions of academic advising tied to the larger context of the universities that continue to exclude students of color" (Mitchell et al., 2010, p. 294).

For example, Mitchell et al. (2010) considered the academic advising office as a racialized, white learning space that signals a culture of "standardization, efficiency, control, and surveillance" (Mitchell et al., 2010, p. 299). The authors problematized a standardized approach in advising diverse student populations; they believe holistic advising for minoritized student populations need cannot be fulfilled in the traditional advising office setting, particularly on a historically PWI campus in the U.S. South. They critiqued contradictory institutional messages about advising, thus: it can promote an individualized student approach on the one hand, but, on the other hand, offers a model geared towards high volumes of students (e.g., advising conversations in 15-minute appointment slots). To further illustrate this point, in a 2019 study of faculty and professional advisors, participants reported that 62% of their time was spent on academic planning versus 28% on advising for learning and development; however, these advisors aspired to spend equal time on academic planning and on learning and development (Troxel & Kyei-Blankson, 2020).

Outcomes-Focused Advising and Institutional Accountability

There are few causal studies on the impact of academic advising, and even fewer with students or advisors of color as the primary subject (Alvarado & Olsen, 2020). In one significant study analyzing academic advising services at 156 colleges/universities (with enrollments between 500 and 35,000 and variations in institution type and selectivity), about 9,000 students reflected on their self-perceived gains in writing, speaking, thinking, statistics, job skills,

collaboration, ethics, diversity, real-world problems, and citizenship (Mu & Foshnacht, 2019). Mu and Foshnacht (2019) uncovered a positive relationship between the frequency of advising meetings and self-reported gains in all areas except for grades/grade point average. Black students accounted for 5.06% of the sample, along with Hispanic students (5.61%), Asian students (4.9%), Native American students (.39%), and FGCS (36%). Noted gains on the impact of academic advising were higher at baccalaureate versus doctoral institutions and for students in majors outside the arts/humanities. Students with parental education levels of high school or below had higher perceived gains than continuing college students. Black and Hispanic students reported higher satisfaction gains with the frequency of advising meetings than White students.

As advising approaches are inherently communicative, precise language for conveying encouragement and support impacts how students perceive their progress. Buchanan et al. (2022) studied two groups of students from two research institutions—162 students in a psychology course and 151 students in first-year courses—and examined how students perceived standardized email messages from advisors about their academic performance. Results revealed a statistically significant positive impact on students from underrepresented groups (FGCS and racially minoritized students) regarding their perceptions of the availability of support and their ability to persist in the face of challenges. While the study addressed email communications and not websites, findings support the claim that the "micro messaging" efforts independent from content-related support (e.g., tutoring) contribute significantly to students' confidence and persistence (Buchanan et al., 2022).

Coordinated and Holistic Advising Systems

Though NACADA has referenced DEI goals tied to academic advising, it has encouraged "institutional conversations" rather than specific equity-focused goals for serving diverse and

minoritized student populations (NACADA, 2020). Recently, NACADA has shifted its focus from building the capacity of individual advisors to supporting institution-wide commitments, collaboration, and systems that support institutional approaches for supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion goals. In Fall 2023, the inaugural "Excellence in Academic Advising" program consisted of 12 "charter cohort" higher education institutions and another 12 in the "Urban Ecosystems Cohort," aiming to "specifically address educational inequities as experienced by underrepresented students, FGCS, and students from socioeconomically challenged backgrounds" (NACADA, 2024b). Institutions committing to the project agreed to the following terms:

1. Foster an enhanced institution-wide commitment to academic advising as integral to the institution's teaching and learning mission.
2. Build an institution-wide academic advising delivery system as determined from close examination of each of the Nine Conditions of Excellence that is responsive to and equitable for ALL students.
3. Increase student success, retention, and persistence through evidence-based decision making, assessment, and evaluation.
4. Support the development and implementation of a set of prioritized institutional recommendations for change.
5. Engage in and promote a culture of continuous improvement as measured by intentional linkages between your institution's NACADA EAA efforts and:
    i. institutional reaffirmation of accreditation quality improvement projects.
    ii. institutional strategic planning processes.
6. Work with NACADA, or on your own, to reflect on and shape the body of scholarship on

academic advising and learning and success as measured by publications, presentations, and other germane scholarly output; and

7. Provide feedback to NACADA to enable continuous improvement of the Excellence in Academic Advising self-study process. (Para. 3)

The emphasis on equity for all students in the second point recalls the tension between universalism and equity. One COFHE school, Johns Hopkins University, is taking part in NACADA's charter Excellence in Academic Advising cohort.

Coordinated Support for Minoritized Student Populations

Minoritized students at elite institutions experience challenges related to feeling a sense of belonging (EdMobilizer, 2022; Jack, 2019; Jack & Black, 2022; Karabel, 2006; Pappano, 2018). Alongside national attention to college completion and academic advising, practitioners are discussing better support systems for FGCS and their intersectional identities. Survey results from nearly 400 student affairs practitioners at 273 HEIs found that priority topics covered by institutional offerings for FGCS included navigating campus resources, academic skills development, finding community, degree planning, and understanding financial aid (Whitley et al., 2018). This study also found that website content ranked high (59%) and fourth after email, staff colleagues, and student leaders as a means of communication to reach FGCS (Whitley et al., 2018). A consortium of 16 institutions at the time of my study have partnered with the Kessler Scholars Collaborative to increase institutional capacity for supporting FGCS through cohort-oriented programming, frequent communication with staff and peer mentors, and asset-based advising approaches (Kessler Scholars Collaborative, 2022). At the time of this study, five COHFE schools are members of the collaborative: Bates College, Brown University, Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

Given the current conversation about academic advising for addressing equity gaps, a growing discourse identifies barriers to effective academic advising for holistic support. In addition to NACADA's Excellence in Academic Advising initiative for participating institutions, scholars and leaders in the profession are encouraging shifts from student-ready to campus-ready paradigms that ask practitioners and executive leaders to question the nature of individualized advising approaches, coordination of campus operations, and advising resource allocations (McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022; Troxel et al., 2021). In *The Future of Advising: Strategies to Support Student Success* (McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022), four case studies describe how institutions reformed their institutional advising structure, incorporated success coaching, articulated a shared advising model across faculty and professional staff advisors, and provided students with tools to map out academic plans and degree completion scenarios.

Using Academic Advising for Data-Informed Analysis

Faculty and primary-role advisors, and an institution's academic advising system (i.e., degree completion tracking portals, major/concentration advisors and online information about degree programs, cohort-orientated advising opportunities) ideally communicate information and interface with students from enrollment to completion. Academic advisors and the advising system possess information about how students experience the learning process; academic advisees and advisors can potentially contribute to qualitative assessments of student learning processes and advising that facilitates learning. Montenegro and Jankowski (2020) argued that assessments must recognize the systems of power and privilege that impact how students experience college. They posited that equity-minded evaluations should include the student perspective, disaggregate data sets, consider the specific context of the assessment, and embed assessment in the culture of expectations and responsibilities. The white paper acknowledged the

resistance that advocates for this method would face. A limitation of the paper is more precisely how the aspirations for an HEI culture that wishes to support equity-focused assessment should occur; it does not provide a tool kit for implementing aspects of their recommendations.

Gagliardi (2022) also argued that equity-focused assessments should include methods and practices that actively consider the students' point of view. The author pointed out that qualitative assessment is especially important for understanding how institutional structures and policy barriers to student success necessitate learning more about how students experience the college environment. The book described the changing demographics of the college-bound population and how predictive analytics and equity-minded assessments are critical to understanding diverse student populations' current, whole-student needs. The author presented several case studies and referenced a list of 116 equity gap indicators in higher education (Education Advisory Board, 2024); one of the named indicators is the barrier to navigating campus resources. Also, the book cited Cornell University's large-scale assessment of student participation in an academic advising course using a qualitative approach. *Ripple Effect Mapping* (REM) is an assessment technique that utilizes student participation and reflection and validates diverse student experiences (Meyerhoff, 2020). The REM assessment has been used for an advising course that aims to create a sense of belonging in the student participants, introduce students to the university's resources and support systems, help students and faculty build stronger relationships with each other, and allow faculty members to understand better students' diverse perspectives (Meyerhoff, 2020, pp. 3–4). The REM method was utilized at the end of the course and included questions for students to reflect on and then share their reflections in groups by visualizing their responses and how the course impacted their sense of belonging and relationships with one another—outcomes that are difficult to measure without a qualitative

assessment. The power of REM lies in the participatory method and sharing of experiences with fellow classmates (Meyerhoff, 2020).

At the time of submitting this dissertation research, a nonprofit consortium of 14 U.S. universities, technology vendors (e.g., learning management systems), and academic publishers are working across constituencies to use data, analytics, and digital technologies to improve students' educational experiences and outcomes (Unizin, 2024). For example, the central convener worked with the University of Michigan and Instructure/Canvas to create a student-facing dashboard where students could 1) view the course resources other students in the class were accessing, 2) use a time management planner for all their course assignments, and 3) view the grade distribution of all students in their courses during the semester (Mowreader, 2024). Also, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, a data dashboard for advisors was designed to centralize information about an individual student's overall academic performance and degree progress; advisors can view their advisees' course enrollments and degree elections, any red flags posted by faculty in the university's learning management system, and the student's participation in campus activities; the advisors' notes are also stored in the dashboard for each student (Unizin, 2024. March 21). These products were tailored to the institutional context, advising needs, and interest in supporting student success.

Chapter Summary

The literature discusses how cultural forces in campus environments can impede academic success, personal wellness, and a sense of belonging for minoritized student populations. Highly selective postsecondary institutions in the United States presumably possess the academic support resources necessary to ensure success for all students, regardless of social identity, once enrolled. These institutions attract a diverse applicant pool partly because of the

availability of generous financial aid. Despite institutional efforts to prioritize diversity and inclusion, the paradox of highly selective, well-endowed institutions is the persistence of racialized and alienating learning and social environments.

As the U.S. college population grows more diverse, college learning environments need to shift from assimilation- and deficit-oriented paradigms to embracing the assets of these diverse students and meeting them where they are. Leaders, educators, and practitioners on college campuses should jointly focus on designing experiences for students that translate how to set goals, support their engagement with learning opportunities, help them wrestle with challenges, and meet basic needs for optimal learning. If the "student-ready" framework became more common, campuses would not operate as siloed units, but as coordinated partners dedicated to educating the whole student and every student—particularly minoritized students.

The call to create culturally responsive college learning environments is growing (Hernandez-Reyes, 2023; Museus et al., 2017). Institutional leaders should consider the communication factors contributing to building connections and trust (Hernandez-Reyes, 2023; Page et al., 2023). Highly selective institutions like the ones in my study face different equity gaps other than college completion; other concerns about differences in the sense of belonging and how students experience learning remain. Facilitating the integration of learning in the liberal arts context requires that students have opportunities to build mentoring relationships and engage in self-reflection (Barber, 2020). Assessing learning experiences and equity barriers to learning require equity-minded assessment approaches that include the student voice (Gagliardi, 2022; Klemenčič, 2018; Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020). These assessments can be implemented with clear equity indicators (Education Advisory Board, 2024) and innovative

methods to involve students and measure more than course content, e.g., the development of relationships and a sense of belonging (Meyerhoff, 2020; Strayhorn, 2019).

Academic advising can serve as an equity-focused approach to supporting liberal learning outcomes. How institutions communicate their commitment to diverse student populations can start with an explicit attempt to do so through their student-facing websites. By analyzing website text, images, and design choices, this study contributes to the discourse on whether and how academic advising purposes and practices are a form of teaching and learning, and how advisors might effectively support liberal education goals and integrative learning processes and outcomes (i.e., connection, application, and synthesis; Barber, 2020). The study considers some students' expectations for "humanized, holistic, and proactive'' academic advising (Museus & Ravello, 2010, p. 56) in the context of elite institutional cultures (Jack, 2019) and histories of exclusion (Karabel, 2006). In the next chapter, I examine how academic advising websites could communicate micro-affirmations for minoritized students and the assets inherent in diverse student populations.

CHAPTER 2: DATA-INFORMED REPORT AND ANALYSIS

Students from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds at highly selective institutions like the study's sample persist and complete college at much higher rates than the national average (NCES, n.d.). Only 11% of the nation's full-time enrolled students attend the most highly selective schools, which represent a mere 6% of all U.S. postsecondary institutions, and only 4 to 5% of high school students from the lowest socioeconomic profile attend the most competitive institutions (Cahalan et al., 2022). College graduates from the most competitive HEIs complete at rates well-above the national average, which was 62.2% in 2022. However, the disaggregation of the data (e.g., by racial and ethnic groups, FGCS, socioeconomic status, gender identity, etc.) at highly selective institutions likely would present differing rates of completion for intersectional identity groups (Crenshaw, 2016; Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020). A greater understanding of how well-resourced liberal arts institutions present information about their academic advising philosophy and services contributes to the discourse about the purpose of academic advising and how these institutions describe advising services and "holistic" support for diverse student populations.

In the context of the current national conversation about the purpose of academic advising and as an institutional responsibility for mitigating postsecondary equity gaps, college websites can provide dialogic information about how institutions characterize their academic advising services. Websites are among many digital platforms that colleges use to reach students, as evidenced by the links to several social media channels on institutional homepages and their various unit landing pages. Websites are designed for multiple purposes and audiences; they are a powerful medium for providing information to the internal community, external stakeholders,

the public, media outlets, and prospective students. Websites convey the institution's mission and values and operate as a repository for its departmental units, programs, and day-to-day operations. They provide a method for communicating, or at least documenting, what information academic advising professionals decide to include about their offerings and intentions. The language used in student-facing websites offers clues about how institutions proactively convey their intentions for engaging students and advisors in developing positive advising relationships (Pitts & Myers, 2023).

In this chapter, I review how content analysis is an ideal method for analyzing college/university academic advising websites and the context in which they exist (the overall institutional web pages and the greater social context). I describe my sampling approach and my findings. Given the findings, I discuss key themes that I infer from how institutions define academic advising and present its strategies and tactical approaches for supporting diverse student populations. I place the findings and inferences in the context of the institutional characteristics of the 20 institutions, and I refer to the national context of college completion and resources dedicated to academic support by drawing data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the U.S. Department of Education *College Scorecard* website. I draw from the academic advising literature and consider concepts such as individually delivered developmental academic advising (Chickering, 1999; Crookston, 1972), academic advising as a form of teaching (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, 2005; Lowenstein, 2020), advising that supports self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009) and liberatory pedagogy (Puroway, 2016), and systemic approaches to providing holistic advising and support (NACADA, 2024b; Thomas & McFarlane, 2018; Troxel et al., 2021).

Data Collection and Analysis Approach

Collecting information from the sample's websites about the purposes, strategies, and tactics employed by colleges/universities for academic advising and its use as an equity-focused tool serves a practical purpose for gathering information for analysis. In addition, using website text, images, and design choices as data units necessitates an engagement with a discourse about digital communications and how HEIs use websites to reach multiple audiences for various institutional purposes (Anctil, 2008; Olivieri, 2018; Saichaie & Morphew, 2014).

Method

Content analysis is an ideal research methodology for analyzing the text, images, and design of college/university websites because these sites serve as a communication vehicle for multiple audiences; the messages to these audiences are sometimes explicit and worthy of exploration for their inferred or latent meanings (Evangelopoulos, 2012). As a method, "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable [reliable] and valid [trustworthy] inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use"; current uses of content analysis are as an "empirically grounded method" for exploring text and image data for "predictive and inferential intent" (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 1). This method also allows for discussing explicit and implicit messages, the varying modes of communication, and communication's dialogic and "discursive" structures (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 2–3). In providing an overview of this research technique, Krippendorff (2019) pointed out that "contemporary content analysis has been forced to develop a methodology of its own'' (p. 4), given the large volumes of digital data available and the vast reach and contexts for digital communications. A content analysis method for analyzing academic advising websites can offer a systematic deconstruction of institutional messages about academic advising purposes and how

they tactically work to support students. Content analysis aims to structure its approach for reliability (producing the same data result on repeat trials) and semantic, structural, and functional validity (ensuring the accurate collection and analysis of the intended data). The method enables the randomized, structured sampling of website text and images that are next organized into recording units; these units can then be coded to describe thematic inferences and meanings and quantified to discern frequencies and comparisons (Krippendorff, 2019).

Researchers use this method for three purposes: to analyze content 1) as contained in the text or images, 2) as content owned by the author, and 3) as latent content that emerges from an analysis of the text or images relative to its context. Krippendorff (2019) posited that all text and media have meanings beyond what the text intends to communicate explicitly. In other words, text possesses meanings in the context of its existence—its shared discourses or intended purposes. Content analysts make "abductive inferences [distinct from deductive and inductive ones], [which] proceed across logically distinct domains, from particulars of one kind to particulars of another kind… they proceed from texts to the answers to the analyst's questions" (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 43).

Upon analyzing the content of college advising websites, one can infer direct and indirect messages about how colleges/universities narrate their academic advising philosophy and the people or groups who offer various modes of advising. A website's content and structure also provide information about the alignment of advising with the administrative units responsible for advising services. Content analysis researchers make "assertions" or thematic analyses of the frequency with which specific content is described or characterized and identify the content's intentions (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 52); this method allows for discussing trends and patterns and determining the frequencies and priorities conveyed in the text. Text—especially within websites

and other digital media—has become a form of what Krippendorff called "social interaction" (2019, p. 69) or "ongoing conversations" (2019, p. 80).

Moreover, websites as a mode of communication represent "institutional processes" beyond the content itself; they infer "access to social realities that are too complex to be understood otherwise" by noticing how patterns in the language used represent actions between people part of the communication exchange (pp. 74–76). Content analysis is "successful" *when the researcher connects the text/content and the social context in which the content exists* (p. 83, emphasis added). Moreover, Krippendorff (2019) explained:

> the point of content analysis is not to study observable behavior or common interpretations but to answer questions concerning events that are not accessible at the time, actions that have not yet been taken, large-scale social phenomena that escape individuals' unaided perceptions, or evidence … for something otherwise difficult to ascertain. (p. 185)

Thus, although academic advising websites are static media, are fluid in its content, and cannot fully represent how academic advising occurs or is received by advisors and advisees, a content analysis of academic advising websites can uncover patterns in the institutional messages provided for the reader to discern about the school's statement of purpose for academic advising, the people involved, and how academic advising operates.

I identified various data points, systematically sampled the collected data, and inferred themes after a coding process. I sought to discover patterns and relationships and compared data with other acquired data. Specifically, I pre-determined the data units to facilitate a replicable approach (reliability) for the 20 institutional websites. I organized the collected data units for analysis in a spreadsheet (Appendix A). Because websites are updated regularly and their content

can be fleeting, the stored data includes URLs for the text/quotes I copied and pasted into the spreadsheets. I also took screenshots of images from the college/university homepage and images on the primary academic advising page.

One of the intended goals of my study is to engage in debates about what academic advising is in theory and practice. Because content analysts make inferences about the content they collect, organize, and systematically examine, researchers using this method must settle on an appropriate approach for ensuring validity or that "the claims emerging from the research are borne out in fact" (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 278). Using a priori descriptors and collecting the sample type of data unit in a spreadsheet improves sampling reliability. Given the "unstable" meanings of academic advising (its intended purpose, who is involved, how it works), the a priori descriptors provide a method for standardizing the search for the variables across all sample websites. However, because of the limited research about how HEIs use websites to convey information, particularly about academic advising, a consideration of website design conventions is necessary to establish the validity of the data analysis and their inferences:

> Structural validity is at issue when content analysts argue whether the analytical constructs they have adopted accurately represent the known uses of available texts, the stable meanings, language habits, signifying practices, and behaviors of a chosen context… When a content analysis is designed de novo, and thus has no history of successes or failures, structural validation is the only way to lend credibility to its inferences… One kind of evidence concerns the roles and practices of the social institutions that create the records to be validated, using their own codes of conduct and preserving certain documents and not others. (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 376)

Therefore, my analysis considers how HEI websites serve multiple purposes (Anctil, 2008; Saichaie & Morphew, 2014) by relying on knowledge of interaction design (Cooper & Reimann, 2003) and UI/UX practices referenced in the first chapter. It also refers to the importance HEIs place on communicating with multiple stakeholders—internal audiences (students, faculty, staff), prospective students, alumni donors, and the media (Saichaie & Morphew, 2014). While this study does not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of websites' interface design, as a researcher, I was influenced by UI/UX principles for building relationships with intended users, choosing a common language known to users, and making content decisions for necessary and pertinent information to benefit users.

Sample

I randomly chose 20 highly selective, private liberal arts institutions—10 research universities and 10 colleges—as my sample for the content analysis. These institutions are members of the 39 Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE). The Consortium's purpose is to collect and analyze data related to "access, affordability, and assessment, particularly as they relate to undergraduate education, admissions, financial aid, and the financing of higher education" (COFHE, 2022). Because access, affordability, and assessment tied to the undergraduate educational experience are central to COFHE's mission, my data set is salient for examining how websites about academic advising describe or demonstrate how diverse student populations can navigate resources, garner support, and learn about engaging with the range of undergraduate educational experiences. My focus on highly selective institutions presumes the availability of human and financial resources to support academic advising relative to other colleges/universities in the United States.

I decided to collect data from a small sample—20 institutional sites—for two reasons. First, the institutional and curricular context for academic advising is critically important; advising at a community college with an older adult population likely would not resemble the advising approaches at the four-year institutions in my sample, and I wanted to examine highly selective institutions with relatively well-resourced academic support allocations (see Appendix E, Figures 20 and 21). Second, I intended to collect several data units/variables (discussed in the next section) to not only compare and quantify the advising approaches but also describe with some detail how the sample institutions explained the role of academic advising and presented the logic of each HEI's chosen tactics. After reviewing these 20 HEI sites dedicated to academic advising and the web pages that provided additional context about each school's living and learning environment, I was satisfied with the diversity of the presentation of content and the patterns and themes that emerged across the sample.

Institutions and their Websites

The data units for analysis were organized in two spreadsheets— "Academic Advising Data" (Appendix A) and" Institutional Characteristics and Demographic Profile" (Appendix B). For Appendix B, I chose the most recent and publicly available information from the institution's website, the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS), and the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard. To better understand these institutions within the national context, I compared the mean and median data for my sample's admission selectivity, cost, enrollment demographics, six-year graduation rates, and financial spending. I compared these data with two other types of institutions: 1) six public universities in each of the six geographic regions of the study's sample colleges/universities and 2) five minority-serving institutions (MSIs) with a high cohort enrollment according to the MSI

Data Project (n.d.). The latter set of institutions primarily serve Asian American and Native American Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiians, Black/African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinx students; one tribally controlled university was part of the MSI comparison group.

The "Academic Advising Data'' text and images in the institutional spreadsheets were collected between August and December 2023 and coded using Dedoose software. I rechecked some aspects of my data during February and March 2024. I searched each institution's main webpage for "academic advising" and its parent page. From these sites, I looked for a purpose statement for academic advising; stated goals for advising; the overall strategies and infrastructure; specific tactical approaches (i.e., programs, online tools); and any references to and enhanced support for diverse and minoritized student populations. I was interested in how each institution's academic advising websites describe what the services support (e.g., choosing classes, choosing a major, or integrated learning; Barber, 2020). I considered how these websites are part of the overall advising system and how they help students navigate campus resources and relationships. I searched for whether the websites described advising as a process for achieving learning outcomes or supporting learning processes. In the coding process, I noticed if the sites were targeting students as individuals or as part of a larger community or identity group (e.g., a "specialized population" or a cohort, such as sophomores). I documented how the sites mentioned the people involved in advising and their roles and responsibilities. Finally, I noted and coded each school's academic advising services for populations and if the college mentioned advising support for minoritized/underrepresented students or cohorts.

Identifying the Primary Academic Advising Website

All the central academic advising websites in my sample contained the following components: "Advising" or "Academic Advising" in the header of the main landing page; a statement about what (academic) advising is and what to expect from it; text that indicated an intent to communicate to or with a current student audience; and a functionality that serves as a portal for various tactical approaches (e.g., information about advising moments such as pre-Orientation, course registration, and open hours with professional advisors; pre-major advising or advising in the majors or concentrations; advising opportunities or services for special populations or cohorts; and directories for faculty or professional advisors).

To aid in identifying the central academic advising site, I first performed a keyword search from each HEI's homepage using the term "academic advising" or "undergraduate academic advising." I recorded the first five hits. Next, I went to each school's homepage link for the page dedicated to current students—17 of the 20 HEI homepage sites had this functionality, and some had an internal/private portal for students, which I could not access. I was curious about any mention of academic advising on these "Information for Students" pages. Finally, I went to the primary page for "Academics" or "College/College of Arts & Sciences" to learn if an academic advising link was available; doing so helped me determine the organizational structure and oversight for the school's academic advising strategy. Some universities in the sample had multiple area-specific schools with undergraduate students. To streamline my analysis of the school, I chose to focus on advising offered for its liberal arts and sciences students. (For some of the university searches, "academic advising" or "undergraduate academic advising" led to more hits for undergraduate or graduate student advising at one of the schools than for their College of Arts & Sciences.)

This study used an a priori design (Neuendorf, 2002) via a spreadsheet (Appendix A). The overarching data collection unit (institutional websites) included the following collection and analysis units: text descriptions on the websites; images and other media (e.g., videos, downloadable files); website navigation menus and page hyperlinks; and intentional inclusion of students' perspectives. The data units were grouped into five core sections: 1) Focal Point for Data Search; 2) Context for Learning and Academic Advising; 3) Philosophy, Structure, and Infrastructure for Academic Advising; 4) Academic Advising and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Foci; and 5) Academic Advising Promise and Accountability.

The subcategories for Section 1 included the main academic advising website, its parent page, and the five sites that appeared most often when I searched for "academic advising" or "college academic advising" for the university sites. While I took into account whether the main advising site appeared in the top five searches, I determined the primary site by noticing several elements: if the site contained language directed to current students; if the page was titled "Advising" or "Academic Advising"; if the site stated the purpose of advising/academic advising; and if it acted as a portal for various advising types (first-year student advising, major advising), advising programs, and resources for advisors. I also noted if the primary site appeared as a link from the college/university homepage's "For Students" page and if advising was hyperlinked from the college's academics homepage. I recorded the menus, submenus, and hyperlinks from the primary site. I took screenshots of any images featured on the main academic advising website or its parent site (e.g., "Academics" page, College/College of Arts and Sciences page).

Section 2 (i.e., the second cluster of data units) documented the following: graduation requirements; curriculum type (core curriculum, distribution requirements by discipline, or open

curriculum); how the academic advising landing page or its parent page described the distinctive features of the curriculum and learning opportunities; and if the sites directly addressed liberal learning goals and outcomes.

For Section 3, I identified the expressed purposes of academic advising addressed to current students and how direct communication occurred. I also documented the primary actors and their roles and responsibilities, approaches in organizing advising functions, and tactics for academic advising. I standardized several variables with specific indicators in drop-in variable menus, such as "Organized Programs," "Web Tools," and "Dedicated Office" for the tactical approaches used in academic advising. After gathering data for two or three institutions, I added other indicators in the drop-down menus for several categories: "Explicitly Stated or Discerned Strategies/Pedagogy/Method/Teachers" (e.g., "by Class Year" or "For Degree Requirements"); "Primary Academic Advising Actors" (e.g., "Faculty" or "Peers"); and "Tactics/Infrastructure/Moments when Academic Advising Occurs" (e.g., "Point Person" or "Referrals"). These distinctions helped me further standardize the data search and collection process.

In Section 4, I noted any target student populations receiving additional services; these "special populations," as they were called on some of the sites, revealed certain aspects of the student population's compositional diversity, the decisions the institution made about additional services or targeted communications, and efforts to bolster these groups' inclusion in the academic experience. In Section 5, I stored any data or referrals mentioning academic advising on the school's admissions website, publicly available quantitative or qualitative feedback on advising, or a diversity-equity-inclusion statement.

Data Clusters: Organizational Management Praxis. To organize and make sense of how the schools 1) explained the purpose of academic advising and its alignment with learning goals, 2) represented their academic advising resources, programs, and services, and 3) where the collective academic advising enterprise was located within the institution, I referred to organizational management practices that discuss best practices in the communication of mission and purpose, vision and values, overall priorities and strategies, and their specific tactical approaches (Collins & Porras, 1996; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Strategies and tactical plans are methods for reaching an organization's aspirational goals. However, a strategy is the overarching approach suited to the goal, and the plan provides the tactics associated with the strategic method. Neither a strategy nor a plan is time-bound; a strategy can be short-term, and its plan of action can be long-term if it aligns with the current strategy for achieving the aspirational goal (Horwath, 2019).

Analysis Approach

Applying Content Analysis: Context and Discourse Analyses

I noted earlier in this chapter that content analysis is ideal for analyzing the text, images, and design of college/university websites because these sites serve as communication vehicles for multiple audiences; the messages to these audiences are explicit and worthy of exploration in terms of its inferred or latent meanings (Evangelopoulos, 2012). Additionally, content analyses lead to making inferences and connecting the content to their larger context—for this study, connecting academic advising website content to the larger context of a liberal arts curriculum, the institution's mission, and its focus on equity and inclusion. A discourse and thematic analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2021) of website text and images uncovers patterns in what is stated or missing and how academic advising websites communicate institutional expectations of their students.

Higher education websites function as official communications and thus necessarily convey institutional intentions, responsibilities, priorities, and promises in straightforward or indirect messages (Cole & Harper, 2017). Latent semantic analyses provide frameworks for not only the content of the sites but also the presentation of content and choices about the sites' organization, inclusion, and exclusions (Evangelopoulos et al., 2012).

Data Triangulation

I brought theoretical triangulation, or a range of theories and conceptual constructs mentioned in Chapter 1, into the research design and process (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). After collecting and analyzing some of my initial data, I prepared an executive summary (Appendix C), and the Dean of the College at my institution (my employer) forwarded an email request to the Deans of the College in the Ivy Plus group, and some of them sent my request to another colleague at their institution. My request for consultive conversations was to triangulate my initial findings and test the validity of my data collection approach. In my email request, I said I would not record our conversation or include their direct feedback in the research (see Appendix D).

The executive summary was the focal point for the discussions with eight academic affairs leaders from six COFHE member institutions representing four research universities and two colleges. These conversations occurred during one group meeting and three individual meetings over Zoom in November and December 2023, and two colleagues provided feedback in an email exchange. The consultive conversations were with colleagues who do not necessarily represent any of the 20 institutions in the sample, and the specific institutions in the sample were not referenced during the meetings. Additionally, a referral from the Dean of the College at my institution led to a conversation with a program director at an organization that partners with

HEIs to provide holistic advising and support for first-generation college and low/limited-income students. The consultive conversations spanned various topics, such as programmatic approaches, a universal design or population-specific approach for academic advising, working with faculty advisors, advising tied to residential communities, decentralized advising structures, and communication strategies to reach students. The practitioner leaders provided insights and contributed to formulating the key themes emerging from the data I analyzed. They reinforced that academic advising websites are static communication tools for describing a dynamic, relational enterprise. One colleague shared that their institutional academic advising website was being redesigned, and another said their new advising website was recently launched.

Limitations

The content analysis method limits the study's conclusions to the website content without explicitly anticipating how readers and users interpret or respond to the messages the sites may or may not convey (Neuendorf, 2002). Due to its relatively small sample size (20 HEIs) and the focus on a specific institution type (highly selective, private liberal arts schools in the United States), the results of this study cannot be generalized to institutions outside the sample.

The focal variables/predetermined data units (academic advising purpose statements, stated goals, infrastructure, activities, desired outcomes, targeted for specific student populations) guided my search for information. While I triangulated the study's initial findings in the consultive group of academic affairs leaders, this research could not incorporate sites and resources accessible only to internal community members (students and advisors). Without speaking to students who view these sites, I could not determine the sites' significance or messaging effects from students' viewpoints.

This study did not use a statistical regression analysis, and as a single researcher, I could not further triangulate the interpretation of my findings. I recognize my bias as an academic advisor at an institution like the sample I chose for the study. The research does not claim causality or user satisfaction, and I acknowledge that the variables are limited to website information.

Researcher Positionality

As the study's author, I must acknowledge my position in higher education's broader conversation about academic advising, elite institutions, equity/access for minoritized student populations, and the need to be intentionally reflective and reflexive in my approach (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I am a university administrator and academic advising dean at one of the most selective institutions in the United States. I have been working at this institution for three decades. I spent part of my career leading an experiential learning consortium of nine colleges and universities, and we offered a study away program about urban education in New York City for liberal arts students. My current advising practice includes students from diverse backgrounds and minoritized student populations. I also supervise primary-role advisors, peer advisors, and peer academic coaches housed in a near-peer academic advising center. I implemented the center's diversity and inclusion action plan and refer to frameworks such as the "hidden curriculum" and asset-based advising when training the center staff. I bring my experiences with connecting liberal learning to social responsibility learning outcomes and my expertise in academic advising praxis into the thematic analyses of the data culled for this study.

My research considered the historical and current "macro-sociopolitical contexts'' of my sample (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I used a reflexive data collection process that incorporated my reflections on the Fall 2023 consultive meetings with six colleagues from four HEIs and a

program director at a national nonprofit organization that supports FGCS. I kept research memos for each school's data collection process and a research journal (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). My positionality as an associate dean for undergraduate learning at a well-known, highly selective institution like the ones in my study necessitated that I collect and analyze publicly available, anonymized data.

Institutional Characteristics of Sample

The institutions represented in the study were randomly chosen from the list of 39 COFHE member schools. However, the sample was intentionally evenly distributed to contain 10 colleges and 10 universities. I assigned pseudonyms for the schools as listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Pseudonyms for Sample College and Universities

C-i: Outstanding College	*U-i: Esteemed University*
C-ii: Top-Notch College	*U-ii: Spectacular University*
C-iii: Stellar College	*U-iii: Unsurpassed University*
C-iv: Foremost College	*U-iv: Exceptional University*
C-v: Prominent College	*U-v: Respected University*
C-vi: Superior College	*U-vi: Preeminent University*
C-vii: Stupendous College	*U-vii: Remarkable University*
C-viii: Celebrated College	*U-viii: Extraordinary University*
C-ix: Reputable College	*U-ix: Distinguished University*
C-x: Quality College	*U-x: Prestigious University*

The sample consists of some of the oldest institutions in the United States, which host among the most selective undergraduate programs in the country. According to the U.S. Department of

Education's College Scorecard, for the entering Fall 2021 cohort, the sample college acceptance rates ranged from 7% to 52%; for the sample universities, rates ranged from 4% to 13%. By contrast, the six public universities used for comparison had an acceptance range between 11% and 92%, and the five MSIs were between 29% and 100%. Appendix E presents an overview of the 20 institutions' characteristics, including demographic data and resources dedicated to academic support. I gathered most of the HEIs' demographic information from IPEDS. I made some comparisons between the sample, six public universities, and five MSIs.

Undergraduate Student Body Diversity Demographics and Completion Rates

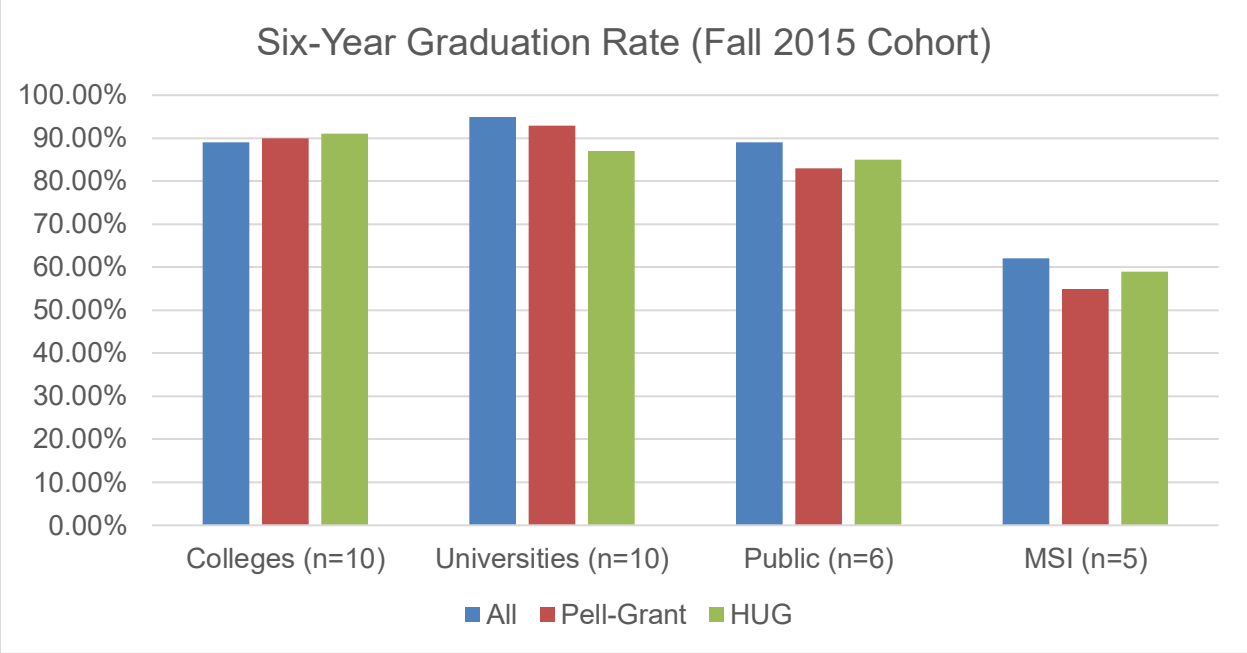
The average percentage of FGCS enrolled in the sample institutions, as reported by the institutions for their entire undergraduate population or the Fall 2023 cohort, was 16% for the 10 colleges and 17% for the 10 universities. Conversely, in 2016, 56% of all U.S. undergraduate students had parents without a bachelor's degree; within this group, 32% had a parent or parents with some college education, and 24% had one parent or both parents who never attended college (Cahalan et al., 2022). Only 5% of the nation's college-bound students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile attended the most competitive institutions between 1972 and 2004 (Cahalan et al., 2022).

For the Fall 2015 entering first-year/freshman cohort, the average overall six-year completion rate was 89% for the sample colleges and 95% for the sample universities, compared with 89% for the public university comparison group and 62% for the MSI comparison group (IPEDS, n.d.). For the sample institutions, the Pell Grant student six-year completion rate was 90% for the colleges and 93% for the universities. For U.S. historically underrepresented minority groups (HUG) students—Alaskan Native/Native American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander—the six-year completion rate was 91%

for the colleges and 87% for the universities in the sample. The six-year completion rate differed by eight percentage points between the general population and HUG students at the sample universities.

Figure 1

Average Six-Year Graduation Rate (IPEDS, entering Fall 2015 cohort)



Note: The national six-year graduation rate was 62.2% for the entering Fall 2015 cohort; for comparison, the average rate was 78.3% at U.S. four-year private institutions and 69% at four-year public institutions (National Student Clearinghouse, 2022). The sample colleges' six-year average was 89% and for the sample universities was 95% (IPEDS, n.d.). The sample university six-year completion rate for HUG students was 87%, eight percentage points below the six-year rate for the general populations at the sample universities.

Financial Resources and Distribution of Services

For the years ending 2022 or 2023, schools in the sample self-reported an average endowment of $1.58 billion (colleges) and $14.98 billion (universities), and the five comparison public universities $6.1 billion. The median percent distribution of core expenses dedicated to academic support was the same for the public and MSI comparison institutions at 16%. It was $7,434 (public comparison group) and $5,787 (MSI comparison group) per full-time enrolled

(FTE) student. In comparison, the sample college median for the percent distribution of core expenses dedicated to academic support was 14.5%, and the sample university median was 7.5%; the sample colleges spent $9,032, and sample universities $12,557 per FTE enrollment. The per-student spending for academic support was 170% higher at the sample institutions than at the five-comparison MSIs. For more information on core spending and revenues, see Appendix E.

Cost and Institutional Aid

In 2023–24, for the schools self-reporting, the total median cost (tuition, room, board, fees) was $82,618.00; for the colleges, it was $82,548.50; and for the universities, it was $83,270.50. By contrast, the median in-state student cost at public four-year institutions in the six regions of the 20 HEIs in the study was $22,515.00, and the median student cost at large-cohort enrollment minority-serving four-year institutions was $6,168.00; one school in the MSI group offered free tuition and only charged fees.

Some institutions provided an estimate of their total cost of attendance, including a calculation for books and course materials, personal expenses, and travel. The median price of attendance for the sample schools reporting was $86,272.00 (or $86,975.00 for the colleges and $85,566.00 for the universities). For comparison, the median cost of attendance for the public university comparison group was $31,230.00, and the median household income in the United States in 2022 was $74,580.00 (Guzman & Kollar, 2023).

For the 2020–21 academic year, the average percentage of full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students receiving institutional grants and scholarships was 68% for the colleges and 54% for the universities in the sample (IPEDS, n.d.). The number of schools in the sample stating they used a need-blind admissions process for first-year U.S. domestic students was 14, as determined by the information provided on the schools'

undergraduate admissions sites. Exclusions for need-blind admissions usually included transfer, international, and waitlist students, but some schools provide aid for some of these populations. Approximately six schools offered aid without any loan expectation (grants instead of loans to cover tuition, room, board, and fees). All need-aware institutions stated they had met 100% of demonstrated student needs in recent years.

Findings

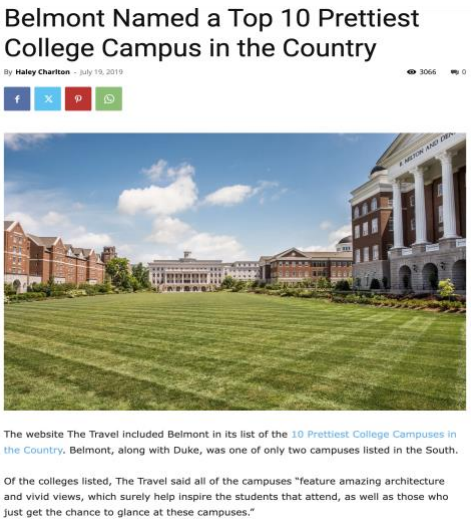
In considering standard website conventions and interaction design principles (Nielsen, 2020), the overall design of the 20 sample institutional homepages used similar conventions, such as putting their name and logo in the upper left corner and placing a search function using the magnifying glass icon and a box in the upper right corner of the page. Many sites had one or two main navigation bars at the top of the page. Occasionally, one of the toolbars focused on *content topics* (e.g., "Academics," "Campus Life," "Research," and "News") with another on intended *audiences* (e.g., "Students," "Faculty/Staff," "Alums," "Friends"). At times, the more prominent upper navigation menu mixed topics and audiences. Upper or lower navigation menus signaled desired actions using verbs such as "Contact Us," "Give," and "Apply," actions which are directed to audiences like prospective students or donors. All sample schools had a place somewhere on the homepage where prospective students could learn about admissions and financial aid. Some homepages listed "Admissions" ahead of the "Academics" topic on their main toolbar. For example, for *Celebrated College,* the top section of the website was focused on prospective students/admissions rather than current campus audiences or topics; for *Exceptional University,* the top section of the homepage congratulated students who had been admitted early in December.

Images featured prominently on all HEI homepages. Some sites offered sweeping aerial

shots of their campus or rotating slide-show views or video clips. The homepages were designed to encourage viewers to scroll through multiple images about daily life, newsworthy stories, special events, or the current fundraising campaign. The typical images of the sample campuses included the archway toward a quad or a wrought iron gate leading into the main campus; regional trees cluing the view to the geographic location of the school and the current season; and students studying in the library, participating in class, on the athletic field, or in a research lab. Architectural images showed viewers gothic windows or spires, Spanish mission-style facades, urban skyscapes, or rural farm sheds, placing the schools in a larger historical and environmental context. Even with these distinctions, campuses prevalent in a Google Images search of "college campuses" shared similar features with those deemed "most beautiful" by ranking publications (Figures 2, 3, and 4). An iconic image of a college campus shows a quad with architecturally complex brick or stonewall buildings, a lush campus green, and students sitting outside on a sunny day.

Figure 2

Google Images Search for "College Campus": "Most Beautiful Campuses," A



Note: One of the top images that appeared with a Google Images search for "College Campus." From "Belmont

Names a Top 10 Prettiest College Campus in the Country," by Haley Charlton, 2019, in *Belmont University News & Media* (https://news.belmont.edu/belmont-named-top-10-prettiest-college-campus-in-country/). Copyright 2019 by Belmont University News & Media.

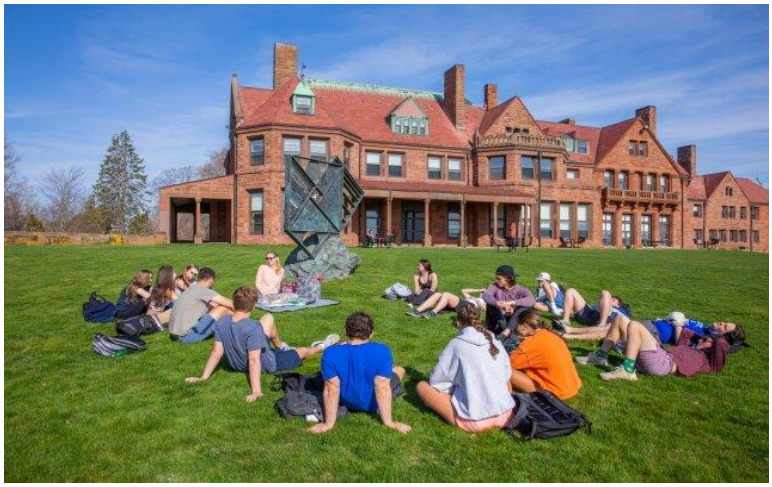
Figure 3

Google Images Search for "College Campus": "Most Beautiful Campuses," B

Note: One of the top images that appeared with a Google Images search for "College Campus." From "The 20 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America," by Darcy Schild, 2019, in *Business Insider* (https://www.businessinsider.com/most-beautiful-college-campuses-rankings-2019-8). Copyright 2019 by Business Insider.

Figure 4

Google Images Search for "College Campus": "Most Beautiful Campuses," C



Note: One of the top images that appeared with a Google Images search for "College Campus." From "15 Beautiful College Campuses," by Cole Claybourn, 2023, in *U.S. News & World Report* (https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/slideshows/beautiful-college-campuses). Copyright 2023 by U.S News & World Report.

Institutional Mission Statements

To fully place the academic advising descriptions in their institutional contexts, I examined each school's mission statement webpage. The 20 school mission statements in most HEI websites' "About" page or section emphatically described student learning outcomes and the school's positive impact on society. Many included their core values, distinguishing characteristics, and goals or priorities. Fifteen statements articulated their primary responsibility to be the education of students. Mission statements also included or focused on the collective impact of their benefits on society—local communities were mentioned in six mission statements, and contributing to global societies was mentioned in 15 instances. Some of the universal learning outcomes mentioned were citizenship, critical thinking, ethical behavior, independent thinking, leadership, lifelong learning, and living a purposeful life.

Some of the HEI mission statements described their distinguishing characteristics by

referencing their historical traditions and a commitment to "excellence." Nine schools highlighted their liberal arts curriculum—not only the colleges—and six mentioned the benefits of their residential campus. In describing the student experience, the statements promised opportunities for discovery and exploration, free inquiry, community, and student transformation. These purposes and promises resonated in the text in the advising sites.

First Impressions of Academic Advising: The Primary Site

I began the sampling process by searching for the primary academic advising site using the first three search strategies in Table 2.

Table 2

Searching for the Primary Academic Advising Site

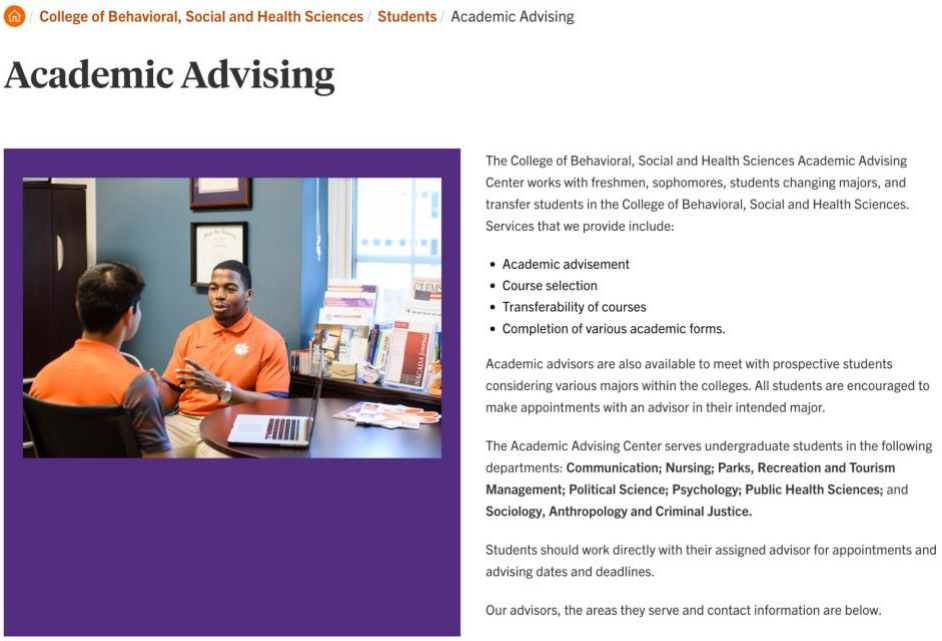
I.	Was the primary academic advising site one of the first five hits in the search?	● First: **13** ● Second: **3** ● Third—Fifth: **3** ● More than five hits: **1**
II.	Was the primary site on the "For Students" page?	● Yes: **7** ● No: **10** ● No "For Current Students" page: **3**
III.	Was the primary site directly linked to the homepage "Academics" site, or the university's college/College of Arts and Sciences main page, the Undergraduate Studies, or the Dean of the College site?	● Yes: **13** ● No: **7**
IV.	Was academic advising mentioned in the institutional admissions pages?	● Yes: **1** ● No: **19**

Images on the Primary Academic Advising Site

Once on the primary academic advising website, the first or foremost section of the page contained various design choices—the language used to address the viewer/reader, navigation menus, images, and contact information. In preparing to code the images from the 20 academic advising landing pages, some were easily captured for a screenshot with one take on a laptop, and other sites required scrolling down to two or more sections. Several pieces of information were explicitly or implicitly conveyed without clicking on the pages in the main navigation menu or linked elsewhere on the landing page. For instance, in the advising purpose statements, academic advising was described as an individualized experience in 18 of 20 instances. For the 17 primary sites that had one or more photos on the landing site—all high-quality images—eight featured a quiet advising conversation between a student and one advisor, all in an office and one instance taking place outside; four featured a group conversation either in an office or outside; one pictured their office location, and another the professional staff photos and contact information; one prominently showed a group of peer advisors wearing their program t-shirt, another a diverse group of students walking together, and another a blurred image of a White female student. Additionally, the ubiquitous availability and accessibility of professional academic advising was emphasized by including a directory of advisors, a central email address, and the ability to schedule an appointment online or view drop-in advising hours. The advisors and students participating in advising were shown to be compositionally diverse by visibly discerned ethnicity and gender in all but one of these images. Though not part of the sample, the three academic advising site images included below are representative of how many of the sample's advising site images featured a one-on-one advising session in an office setting. (I have not chosen to include any images here to protect the identity of the sample institutions.)

Figure 5

Google Images Search for "College Academic Advising," A (Image Not Part of Sample)



Note: One of the top hits for a Google Images search for "College Academic Advising." From "Academic Advising," by Clemson University, 2024, in *College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences, Academic Advising* (https://www.clemson.edu/cbshs/students/advising/index.html). Copyright 2024 by Clemson University.

Figure 6

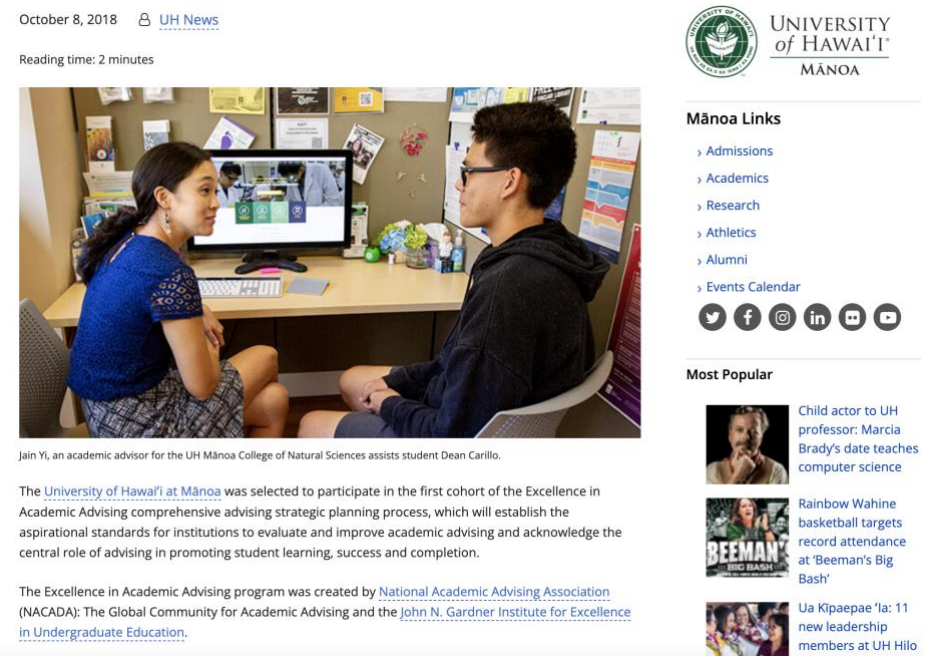
Google Images Search for "College Academic Advising," B (Image Not Part of Sample)

Note: A video about academic advising at Rhode Island College; One of the top hits for a Google Images search for "College Academic Advising." From "Office of Academic Advising," by Rhode Island College, 2024, in *Office of*

Academic Advising (https://www.ric.edu/department-directory/division-student-success/student-services/office-of-academic-advising). Copyright 2024 by Rhode Island College.

Figure 7

Google Images Search for "College Academic Advising," C (Image Not Part of Sample)



Note: One of the top hits for a Google Images search for "College Academic Advising." From "UH Manoa Chosen for National Select Program to Improve Academic Advising," by UH News, 2018, in *University of Hawai'i News* (https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2018/10/08/uh-manoa-national-academic-advising/). Copyright 2018 by University of Hawai'i News.

The advising purpose statements, site navigation menus, and central photo images communicated who the advisors were—professional or primary-role staff, advising/class deans, and faculty; peer advisors and residentially-based advisors were mentioned, too, but less frequently. The landing page content conveyed overall strategies for advising and how advising tactically works. Strategies included help with academic skills and competencies, guidance for choosing a major/minor/other degree program; and offices dedicated to experiential learning opportunities such as study abroad/away programs, fellowships, and internships. Tactical

approaches ranged from centralizing services through an advising center or dean's office, assigning an advisor to work with students from enrollment to graduation, and online degree completion tools. Some landing pages foregrounded student outcomes described with words like "success" and "achievement," and listed the ability to make independent decisions, and, through advising, meeting students' goals. More specific tactics for advising will be discussed later in this chapter.

Advising for (Liberal) Learning

The formal curriculum and informal learning environment provide the context for academic advising. For this reason, my sampling included the primary (undergraduate) "Academics" sites or the parent pages of the main advising sites. If it was not the school's primary "Academics" site, then I sampled the page for Undergraduate Studies or the Dean of the College. The text on these sites described distinguishing features of the undergraduate curriculum (e.g., core or open curriculum, academic majors and departments, faculty directories), distinctive co-curricular learning opportunities, what students could expect from their experiences and graduation requirements.

Several of the HEI website descriptions about "academics" included the breadth of courses offered, the school's distinguished and accessible faculty, and cross-curricular or interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Diversity, collaboration, and community were often foregrounded as integral to the learning experience and culture. For example, *Outstanding College* wrote how their campus community fosters the expression of different and unique points of view; opportunities for analysis and synthesis with diverse others give learners the ability to question their assumptions and prepare graduates for living in diverse communities and global contexts. *Remarkable University's* page stated that diversity creates opportunities for creativity

and innovation, further declaring that the university community is committed to an inclusive learning environment. *Superior College* centered on the historical and current inequalities in the nation and worldwide and the school's commitment to critically understanding these circumstances and addressing them as they show up within the campus community.

On the high level of these "academics" sites, three universities and three colleges included undergraduate research, noting the research function of higher education and how it leads to innovative teaching and learning. *Extraordinary University* referred to itself as a premiere research institution. *Top-Notch College* and *Quality College* described close contact with faculty and doing research with them, and *Preeminent University* mentioned research opportunities available year-round. *Prominent College* promoted its small size and intimate classroom environment; it contrasted its small population to large universities and promised individualized attention and support. *Esteemed University* assured the reader that they would be deeply known. Some HEIs promoted their distinctive qualities from other institutions, such as citing their location and access to local community resources or an intimate learning community.

On the "academics" sites, nine schools provided a list of learning goals or outcomes. *Stupendous College* stated the curriculum encourages students to learn to be independent thinkers and enact change. *Prestigious University* promised the learning outcomes will benefit students throughout their lives. *Foremost College* explained how their writing requirement would benefit their careers after college. *Superior College* forecasted students' ability to create original scholarship during or because of their undergraduate experience.

The sites about academic resources and experience often included values such as social responsibility, diversity, a sense of tradition, wellness, excellence, creativity, freedom, and the search for truth. Two colleges and three universities did not directly reference or discuss their

liberal arts curriculum on these top-layer pages: *Celebrated College, Reputable College, Exceptional University, Preeminent University, and Unsurpassed University*. The references to liberal learning were explicitly mentioned in most of these primary academics, undergraduate, or College of Arts and Sciences sites; the text provided broadly worded or detailed descriptions of the benefits of their curriculum in terms of opportunities, the learning environment and process, and student learning outcomes. *Remarkable University* encouraged students to commit to exploring and getting a broad liberal education. Fifteen of the 20 schools prioritized the description of specific learning goals, most often emphasizing the learning process and several learning outcomes tied to their liberal learning curriculum and co-curriculum. *Celebrated College, Stupendous College, and Esteemed University* offered their first-year seminar program as a method for an interdisciplinary and intimate learning experience that would introduce students to broad and foundational liberal learning competencies such as critical thinking and evidence-based analysis.

Whether possessing general distribution requirements or a core or an open curriculum, the text on these sites repeatedly took a "more is good" approach to explain their offerings and requirements. For example, several schools used a tile-and-click or other sorting method for users to browse their majors, minors, and other academic programs; Table 11 in Appendix E highlights that the sample colleges offered an average of 44 majors and 46 minors, and the sample universities offered an average of 59 majors and 32 minors. Some sites prioritized their curriculum's evolving and dynamic nature rooted in tradition. *Spectacular University* described its core curriculum as fostering capacities for self-reflection. *Foremost College* mentioned students' excitement in designing their academic path in an open curriculum alongside faculty willing to support their goals. The co-curricular or experiential opportunities (e.g., most often

research, along with guaranteed access to internships, study away/abroad programs, local community involvement, and the uniqueness of the school's location or setting) were framed as providing students with "real world" applications to complement their liberal arts studies.

Many sites used a dialogic approach to persuade the reader about the importance of their writing requirement, foreign language requirement, or first-year seminars; for example, *Respected University* wrote how their distribution requirements encourage "you" to be challenged and how the learning will lead to essential skills for a career, civic engagement, and personal growth. Descriptions of liberal learning became synonymous with a learning process. The learning process and environment included assurances of multiple opportunities to build relationships with faculty who would become mentors, the abundance of experiences for exploration and discovery, and the "breadth and depth" afforded by the liberal arts. The academic pages offered an array of what to expect: a culture of dialogue across differences, the residential experience contributing to learning, encouragement to step outside of one's comfort zone and take risks, and the ubiquitous availability of support when encountering difficulties and challenges. Because goal setting and planning are part of the learning process, school websites usually referred to a community of advisors available to help students chart their unique pathways in college and plan for life beyond it.

Even though some sites addressed a general audience, many were working to engage a current student population. The assurances of building relationships, finding support, and "being seen" as an individual paired with the pedagogical approach to deconstruct curricula were sometimes directly tied to the availability of advising faculty, professionals, and resources. *Distinguished University* used a directive approach and told students to find them—faculty and staff were described as never too busy to provide guidance and support. The specifics of advising

(i.e., philosophies, strategies, and tactics) are laid out in the next section.

Academic Advising Purpose Statements

The academic advising purpose or mission statements, written using succinct or descriptive text, were either labeled as such or prominently featured in the leading site. Several statements made explicit connections between the learning context and academic advising. The sites often addressed current students directly, using "you" in the text or wording meant to encourage, guide, or support their experiences. Many of the primary websites yielded information about the topics for which undergraduates (may) need advising, what academic advisors (or the advising system) can do, where/when and how academic advising occurs, and who is responsible for giving or receiving advice.

Exploration and Designing a Pathway

The most prevalent described purpose of advising was helping students discover their individualized and unique educational experiences, referring to liberal learning as a process of exploration. These processes included broadly described milestones, such as "intellectual development," "personal growth," navigating many opportunities and experiences, and mindsets to inhabit for taking intellectual risks. *Prominent College* described its pre-major advisors as teaching students how to explore various academic areas and ideas and helping new students become accustomed to academic culture.

Along with these concrete discussion topics, several indicators for what advisors (or the advising system) can do—advising strategies—were assurances of the continuity of advising. For example, a few schools assigned a point person (professional advisor or class dean) to "follow" the student from entry to graduation. Continuous advising could also happen if an office or unit took responsibility for shaping the support students received at various stages of their college

experience. Five institutions' pages (three colleges and two universities) listed what students could expect from each year (first year through senior year). Adopting a prescriptive and developmental advising approach, the advice year to year included encouraging students to spend the first year "exploring the curriculum"; *Top-Notch College* presented how to understand exploration of the broad academic disciplines such as the Humanities and Social Sciences by naming the academic fields within them. The typical advising progression was for curricular exploration in the first year, deciding on a major/concentration as a sophomore, considering study abroad, internships, fellowships, or learning about research opportunities as a junior, and participating in the degree completion online audit along with planning for post-graduation. Some of these milestone lists included feelings students might have or challenges they might face. *Unsurpassed University* and *Exceptional University* encouraged ongoing self-reflection about student goals and learning milestones; *Superior College* offered a portfolio platform for students to share with others through a mentoring program.

The "pre-major" and "major" advising types were described as two distinct advising conversations, though pre-major advising included conversations about the student's plans for a major. Career exploration and planning were often part of what academic advising included as a natural extension of the college learning trajectory or because the career office was part of the division in charge of academic advising.

Continuity and "Holistic" Advising Support

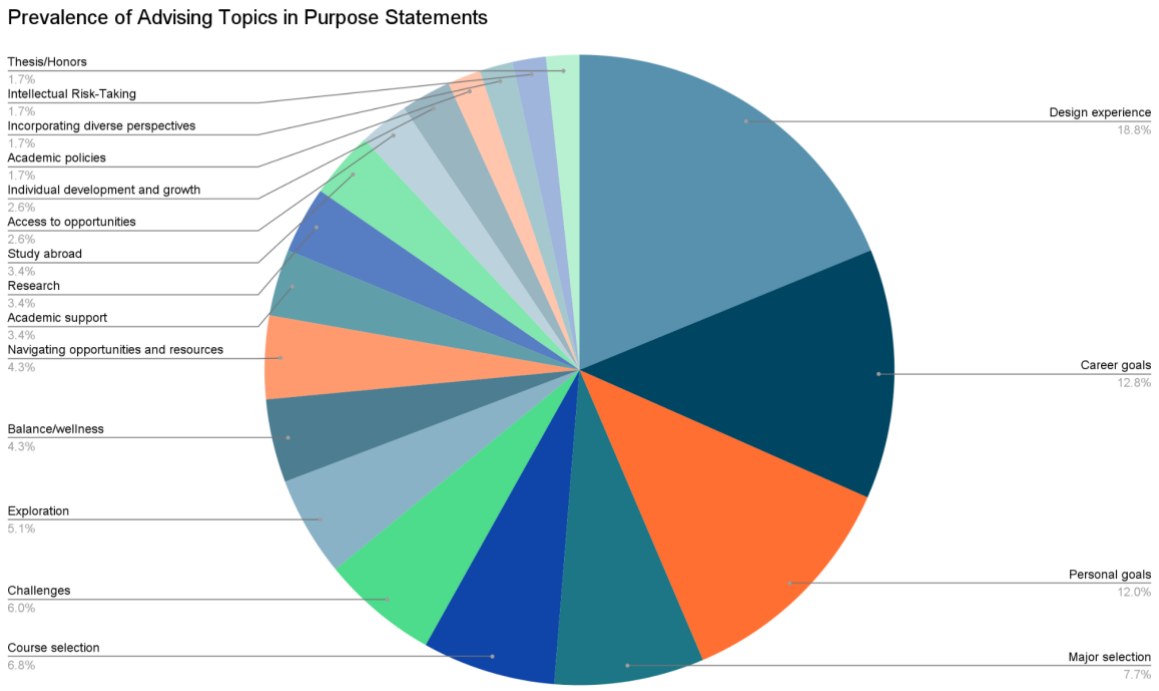
Advising was usually described as continuous and an opportunity to "be known" through ongoing relationships with faculty and professional and peer advisors. Addressing difficulties or challenges was mentioned on less than half of the sample's primary academic advising sites. However, advisors were described as having the capacity to "empower," "ensure" academic

success, and "guide" or "support" students in making decisions or facing challenges. Several references were made to advisors who know how to refer appropriately to campus resources.

Descriptions conveyed 1) how individual advisors played specific roles (pre-major vs. major advising, advising deans vs. faculty advisors) and 2) the school's intentional effort to have advisors make referrals. Yet the sites used language that communicated how students could count on always having someone to talk to or a point of contact with the ability to refer to other experts in the systems so that students receive holistic advising and support. The overall advising enterprise was frequently called an "advising community" or "advising network." Explanations of advising contrasted the availability of "general advising" and advising topics that I captured through coding and visualize in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Prevalence of Named Topics in Academic Advising Purpose Statements

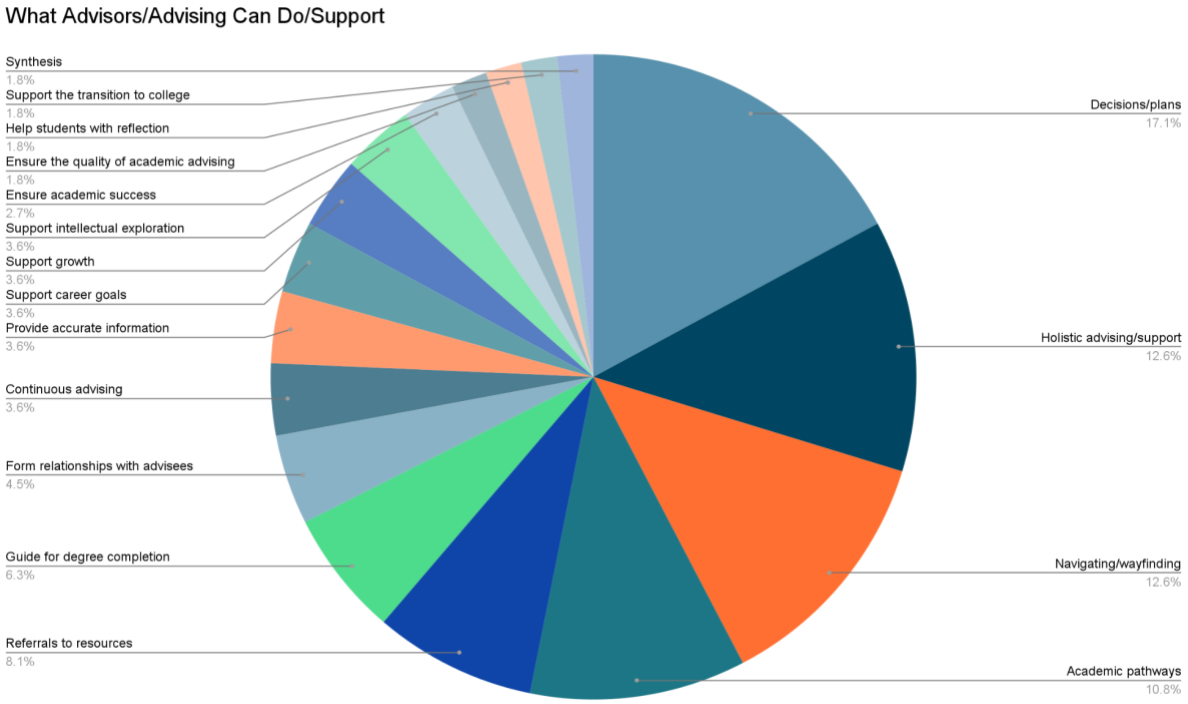


Note: In the academic advising purpose statements, the "designing educational experience" topic outweighed the

next two topics (career goals and personal goals), major selection, and course selection in the 20 academic advising purpose statements reviewed.

Figure 9

Prevalence of What Advisors/Advising Can Do, in Academic Advising Purpose Statements



Note: In the academic advising purpose statements, the prevalence of what advisors or academic advising can do mostly pertained to helping with making decisions and plans, followed by providing holistic advising and support. The prevalence of these functions outweighed guidance for degree completion statements.

"How Advising Works"

Using a dialectic approach, many purpose statements described facets of the advising system or the people and offices involved and briefly outlined their roles and responsibilities. A "community" or "team" of advisors was often mentioned; alternatively, the existence of advising was described in terms of a network or systemic approach. Faculty were typically noted; advising/class deans, professional advisors, or advising centers primarily support faculty in their

advising roles. Other strategies emphasized the "student's responsibility" in building a "partnership" with faculty and professional advisors. In one instance, the responsibility on students to actively craft their path and seek out support was described as "challenging" yet ultimately a rewarding experience.

In summary, the purpose statements emphasized specific topics for advising and what advisors, or the overall advising network can do. The messages about providing academic advising conveyed to students the availability of point people or offices with specific roles (specialized advising) and a system designed to coordinate holistic support for all students (e.g., an advising center or advising deans). Many purposes described used dialogic approaches that were prescriptive or developmental (Chickering, 1994; Crookston, 1972) or attempted to communicate humanized and holistic advising (Museus & Ravello, 2010). Liberal learning is inherently exploratory. For this reason, the advising purpose statements tied learning and finding pathways to academic advising. One college described advising as not only formally organized but also informally happening over meals in the dining room with faculty, and a university wrote advising occurred with almost anyone in the school community—professors, peers, coaches, and "anyone you meet."

Aligning Purpose: Advisors (Who), Programs (What), Opportunities (How and Why)

Advising purpose statements provided some details about the "who, what, where, when, and how" of advising; some sites emphasized the tactics (where, when, and how) more explicitly than others. Given the emphasis on the learning process and the availability of holistic support, these listed resources attempted to communicate their academic advising services akin to "something for everyone."

I could discern in most instances if the institutions in the sample used a hybrid approach

(shared responsibility across divisions or units), a centralized system (one division/unit), or a decentralized method (several divisions/units overseeing parts of the advising system or large segments of the undergraduate population) for their academic advising offerings. For one college, the overall organizational structure and oversight for the primary academic advising offerings for the general population was unclear.

Table 3

Structural Organization of Academic Advising Based on Website Navigation

Colleges	● Hybrid: 5 ● Centralized: 4 ● Unsure: 1
Universities	● Hybrid: 4 ● Centralized: 4 ● Decentralized: 2

Most of the sample institutions chose to place the primary responsibility for academic advising with an academic affairs division or unit; fewer than five schools located their primary academic advising responsibilities within the student affairs area, although this may be the case because the academic affairs area was dedicated to working with faculty only. The primary academic advising unit was often described as being responsible for "general advising" and ensuring the overall academic experience of undergraduate students and the liberal learning process. For example, *Respected University* emphasized the strength of their "advising community" to include several kinds of advisors, from those focusing on academic planning to others who help students tackle difficulties.

Outstanding College provided general guidance on which advisors and students could

contact for advising questions and topics and how the advising office listed on the page could help students with specific questions. Some websites provided information for a faculty advising audience; the website served as an opportunity to share tips, best practices, and advising scenarios. One school included two advising scenarios featuring students experiencing medical or mental health challenges.

Who: Responsibilities and Roles

When academic advisors were directly referenced in the sample institutional websites in specific advising situations, peer advisors, advising/class deans, professional advisors, and faculty were mentioned most frequently. Additionally, peers, deans, professional advisors, and faculty were described as inhabiting roles, such as pre-major or liberal arts advisors, major or concentration advisors, residential advisors, or academic "success" coaches. When looking for language describing the primary *responsibilities* (beyond skills) these primary advisors possessed, generalized "support," "general advising," career guidance, knowledge of college/university policies, referrals to other resources, degree completion-related advising, and course selection/registration were prevalent in the role descriptions. Sometimes, the sites used to "advise" and "mentoring" interchangeably.

"General advising" from faculty advisors was usually coupled with explanations that referrals are part of the advisor's role. Some sites also paired descriptions of faculty advising with the availability of professional advising from the unit overseeing advising (e.g., the academic/class deans or advising center) to offer additional support. Some institutional approaches for faculty advisors while serving in the pre-major role were to advise students in academic areas directly or closely related to the academic field of interest that incoming students identified.

For some of the schools, the primary academic advisor assigned in the first year was expected to offer some form of support for conversations about careers or referrals to others with expertise in career advising—generalized or clustered in a "pre-professional advising" office for pre-health, pre-law, or other pre-professional areas. These instances of career advising, if not explicitly attached to the primary academic advisor's role, were part of an office in the academic structure or within the division where academic advising was adjacent to career or pre-professional advising. Career advice adjacent to academic advising runs counter to certain discussions in the literature about the role of academic advisors (Lowenstein, 2020).

Advisors' availability and effectiveness were also either explicitly or implicitly included in the advisor's role. For example, some institutions designated a primary advisor that follows a student from the beginning of their enrollment to the completion of their degree. This advisor witnesses the student's development from start to finish, essentially supporting "the journey" of one's college experience. Other primary advisors assume the role of addressing urgent matters: they are either "point people ‘’ or part of a group of advisors typically available for drop-in advising. Sites described these advisors as being ultimately responsible for proactive advising conversations. Language about being present for milestones in a student's college experience—making decisions about their major, career development pathways, and high-impact learning opportunities—suggests that advisors are expected to offer multifaceted advice or refer their advisees to other advisors/offices.

Expectations for advisors and advisees were outlined on some sites. For example, one site explicitly mentioned "being knowledgeable" about transfer credit requirements and processes, study abroad programs and policies for participation, and the importance of in-person meetings rather than relying on virtual communication. A few sites also outlined specific responsibilities

for student advisees, such as reading the information about advising and registration and being responsive to advisors' outreach. *Exceptional University's* site mentioned the importance of "being open" to building rapport with their advisor, and another university site conveyed the expectation for advisees to offer a welcoming atmosphere when the faculty/professional advisor attended an advising event in the student's residence hall. While most sites did not explicitly outline specific advisee responsibilities and behaviors, several sites referenced the importance of "self-directed" action and being proactive when needing guidance and support.

Advisors and Their Roles. More than half of the sample institutions connected academic advising to the residential environment. Faculty, professional advisors, or peers live in the same dorm with their advisees or are connected to a residence hall community. "Academic concerns" versus "non-academic concerns" were delineated when describing roles and responsibilities. Five schools had an academic advising center that coordinates advising for undergraduates.

Peers. One of the most prevalent forms of community-based academic advising was attached to peers, who perform roles at new student orientation, during the first year, in residence halls, for specific cohorts, or as academic coaches or tutors. Peer roles were most often associated with a "mentoring" role, and they were also called "advisors," "leaders," or "ambassadors." Some peers' roles were more directly related to tutoring for courses or coaching for academic skills. Others only played a role in new student orientation or during the first year. Peer advisors were described as offering guidance, support, and inspiration in facilitating the transition to college; helping students navigate college resources; and fostering a sense of community and belonging. *Reputable College* promoted an online searchable advising database from peer advisors to help with course selection. *Top-Notch College* said their peer advising network provided all students with a guaranteed community of care and support.

Often used as a tactic for college admissions and recruitment purposes, several academic advising websites featured quotes from students about their feelings about the school. A few featured more extended reflections or videos about students' experiences and sense of belonging. *Unsurpassed University* included reflections and photos from a compositional diversity of students who discussed initial uncertainties and feelings of isolation. Whereas most peer mentoring programs were part of a first-year experience, two schools tied it to sophomore-year advising. The descriptions of peer mentoring often conveyed the development of an ongoing relationship and the ability to offer holistic support and multifaceted advising.

Faculty. Faculty served in pre-major and major advising roles from the primary advising websites. In major advising roles, faculty are described as being able to offer their field-specific expertise and guidance. They lead in being at department-specific or campus-wide events designed to introduce students to the major's degree requirements and people in the department. As pre-major advisors, faculty, whether associated with a residence hall or as part of another first year advising program, are described as generalists who refer students to other people and campus resources. At every sample institution, a student would be assigned an academic advisor, often a faculty member—though many schools clarified that a student may have a professional advisor instead. Some advising websites included training materials or tips for pre-major advisors. The featured online advising scenarios usually involved students encountering personal or academic difficulties. Some descriptions mentioned being alerted about students' academic progress/standing. There were a few instances where pre-major faculty advisors could be in roles with reduced responsibilities in their academic departments.

Advising/Class Deans and Professional Advisors. Advising or Class Deans and professional advisors from academic advising centers, learning "success" centers, or experiential

opportunity or career centers were prominently mentioned in several advising sites. These professionals oversee and participate in the general academic advising systems or advise the general population about experiential opportunities or career exploration. Some are specifically associated with cohort-focused advising—athletes, transfer students, international students, accessibility/disability populations, or minoritized student groups. Administrative advisors often provided general advising and specific or specialized services. Cohort-focused advising and advisors are discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

Communicating Pedagogies and Tactical Approaches

When considering concepts and frameworks for academic advising (e.g., prescriptive, developmental, and intrusive; humanized, holistic, and proactive) and liberal learning praxis (integrative learning, high-impact practices, AAC&U's VALUES Rubrics), the sample's website content can be used to understand institutional or systemic strategies for "developmental academic advising" or advising as adjacent to or part of a teaching and learning endeavor (Lowenstein, 2020). For the 20 institutions, I recorded the three to five most mentioned overall approached used for academic advising; the most prevalent deployment of advising found in the website content was about advising for declaring a major, pre-major advising, and meeting degree requirements. Pre-major advising included orientation activities, advice about course selection, and making the transition from high school to college.

Figure 10

Five Most Frequently Cited Academic Advising Approaches

Note: Coding the text from the primary advising sites for the 20 institutions, the five most frequently cited approaches for academic advising included for choosing a major, for first year and sophomore students (pre-major), and for meeting degree requirements. Pedagogy types included providing holistic support, the existence of an advising community, and the HEI's expectation that students take some responsibility for receiving academic advising.

Top-Notch College directly mentioned how students need to "take responsibility" for obtaining advice on any situation. The text acknowledged how students may feel overwhelmed by their situations or the choices they need to make, but advisors, friends, and "so many resources" were available to help. *Quality College* mentioned academic peer mentors who can help students overwhelmed by their academics succeed through individualized support.

When reviewing the subpages of the primary advising site and references to advising on the parent page, the liberal arts curriculum and liberal learning process and outcomes were often directly referenced as being supported by academic advising. One school's overall advising approach explicitly mentioned a liberal arts education as tied to intellectual and personal growth and how the unit provides an array of resources to meet the student's goals; another directly tied the overall learning experience to the ability to live a purposeful life. Other advising sites or the site's divisional home listed liberal learning outcomes such as those in the AAC&U VALUE

Rubrics (2009): citizenship, innovative problem solvers, and effective communicators. Lifelong learning and the ability to face challenges were part of the institutional assurances of the result of a liberal education and the support students would receive from a community of advisors throughout their enrollment.

New students (first years and transfer students) were assigned one academic advisor and for students at some schools, one is assigned to them for the entirety of their undergraduate experience. Listing the multitude of advisors whether assigned or self-selected signaled offering multiple types of advising assistance: not only with course registration and major selection, but also with reflection, skills development, meeting challenges, taking risks, and discovering more than they could have imagined as a new student. Many sites described holistic and multifaceted advising moments such as learning about research opportunities, internships and career development, and self-fulfillment. The messages conveyed how advising is everywhere and readily available: advising in dormitories, drop-in advising or emailing professional staff with quick questions, and the availability of virtual appointments indicate how to access various advising resources and connect with generalists or specialists. Several sites outlined the range of academic learning, personal development, and career-oriented goals that the advising system can help students meet.

The symbiotic language of "choosing," "pathway," and "journey," along with "guide you" and "meaningful relationships," evoked a sense of excitement, possibility, and freedom. Institutional guidance on making the most of one's college experience included the availability of advising resources and an expectation that students would actively use them. This expectation follows the extensive information about advising—the assurance that students can at least find the information they need online. Some semantic instances of prescriptive advising or persuasion

were used when discussing seeking support during times of indecision, confusion, or stress.

Distinct Advising Approaches/Types. Some schools differentiated "academic advising" from "academic support," either as a subfield of advising or as distinctive and aligned with learning in the classroom. Some schools referred to their teaching and learning, writing, or quantitative skills centers. Academic coaching at the HEIs in the study reflected an opportunity to develop effective study strategies, time management, knowledge retention, and midterm/final exam preparation. Of the schools offering coaching support, two described the availability of professional staff, and the rest mentioned peer coaches.

On these public websites, I did not find any direct reference to support for students on academic probation. However, two schools' advising sites led to a description of a committee reviewing students under this circumstance. Academic support, including academic skills enhancement or tutoring programs, was characterized as a routine student service.

Comparing Colleges and Universities. The advising strategies, pedagogies, and people involved in providing advising services did not seem to diverge significantly between the colleges and universities, perhaps because I focused on the HEI's College of Arts and Sciences if there were multiple schools. *Expectational University, Respected University*, and *Unsurpassed University* emphasized academic advising tied to people living in or affiliated with the residential colleges. Though not associated with the dormitories, *Prestigious University* explained how advising was part of the fabric of the living-learning environment, and it listed advising groups, programs, and centers that address the transition for new students, choosing a course of study, and connecting learning to life after college. Most of the sample institutions described an abundance of peer advisors, mentors, or coaches. Academic advising seemed to be woven into the fabric of day-to-day life at the each of the schools.

Tactics (Implementation) and Dialogic Typologies

I applied codes nearly 600 times to the collection of unitized academic advising processes and tactics—how academic advising is organized and works for students. Website text provided information about new student orientation, residential advising events, advising workshops offered by professional staff in advising centers, and advising from pre-major faculty advisors related to choosing courses and declaring a major. Many of these offerings provided prescriptive advice and the availability of holistic support for the transition to college as a first-year or transfer student.

Pre-major advising included descriptions of getting to know an individual student's goals and helping the student make plans. Major advising often included a searchable database of the school's majors, minors, certificates, and consortium exchange programs. Advising in the sophomore and junior years also referenced help with finding research opportunities, internships, career pathways, study away/abroad, and community-based learning opportunities in the school's surrounding area. A few sample schools used a first-year experience model attached to a course or residential community to teach students about academic learning and campus resources.

Following guidance for being self-directed and taking initiative, some websites offered tools for self-monitoring and self-reflection. Two schools provided an online course search tool with which first-year students could find recommended classes. Some schools used their advising website to present an overview of learning and what to expect during each year of college; they also offered guidance on how to approach various decisions and milestones. Two other websites encouraged students to reflect on their experiences and share their thoughts with others using a campus portal. Some sites contained videos of academic advising or skills workshops, and some mentioned an online platform to help students monitor their degree

completion progress. In one instance, the tips and learning milestones were addressed to the advisor audience but not the students.

Advising for "Special Populations." Seventeen of the HEI primary academic advising sites explicitly included at least one special population; two more did on the parent site; and the final two HEIs did on a site listed from their "For Students" or "New Students" page. (The exclusion of a group from the academic advising site may simply indicate that the primary administrative unit or division responsible for or overseeing advising for the general population may not oversee it for a specific group.) Transfer students were often included from the primary site (nine institutions). Eight institutions directly referenced students needing ADA accommodations on their primary site (five) or the parent site (three), and accommodations were featured for 13 HEIs overall.

The cohort most often cited for specialized support was based on socioeconomic status: "low income," "limited income," "income eligible," or "high(est) demonstrated financial need." Low- or limited-income students were mentioned on six primary academic advising sites, five parent sites, and at six more HEIs in a location easy to find from the "For Students" or "New Students" page. The next largest cohort was FGCS; this group was mentioned on 16 HEI sites overall and on four primary advising sites and five parent sites. These two groups were often called first-generation and low- or limited-income students, or "FLI" students. Some websites provided details and media content dedicated to stories about and institutional support for FLI students. The next section addresses FLI advising and specialized support more thoroughly.

"Special Populations"—Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity

All 20 institutions committed to what has come to be called DEI in higher education; every school had a DEI mission statement located somewhere on their website. Some schools in

the sample mentioned DEI on the primary academic advising site or the parent page (divisional oversight for advising). Communication efforts signaled the intentional acknowledgment of diverse populations while expressing a commitment reaching and serving all students.

Eleven institutions directly addressed low-/limited-income students and nine directly addressed FGCS from the academic divisional area (academic advising or academic affairs). Sixteen schools in the sample offered specialized advising for FLI students; in other words, some schools offered it outside the main academic advising area. Careful to use language and images that demonstrated FLI student pride and their contribution to the campus community, the goals for specialized support addressed tangible barriers (e.g., monetary support for emergencies, course materials, and basic needs like food insecurity). Some institutions directly named the inequity of attending an "under-resourced" high school, thus providing merit scholarships, and advising support for STEM-interested students or specialized academic coaching to prepare students for college academics. A few institutions offered a summer bridge program or one for the entire first year of college. Some institutions partnered with outside organizations such as the Kessler Scholars Program, Posse Foundation, Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, McNair Scholars Program, Mellon Mays Fellowship, TRIO Program, or a regional state program for minoritized student populations.

The FLI advising models were described as building a sense of community, mitigating isolation by fostering belonging, and providing opportunities for forging advising relationships. Several FLI programs used peers as advisors/mentors/coaches/leaders, and their stories were often featured on these advising pages. Humanistic, multifaceted, and proactive advising pedagogies abounded in FLI advising models. Direct references to unveiling the "hidden curriculum" and ensuring academic "success" were part of this approach; some FLI programs

were administered by the school's "success" center. One school's career center provided FLI students with dedicated advising and social programming.

In addition to transfer students, other populations specified on primary advising sites included students needing ADA accommodations, international students, athletes, military veterans, and non-traditional-age students. Support for some cohorts necessitated compliance (i.e., with ADA regulations, NCAA mandates, or F-1/J-1 visa rules), though the sites also communicated additional reasons for enhanced advising. Some schools discussed academic advising for international students to gain cultural fluency in U.S. academic culture and pedagogy. Many institutions supported these populations through centers, dedicated professional advisors, or dorm-based or center-based programming.

None of the primary advising sites directly referred to students of color within their student-facing academic advising site, and five institutions' parent websites described specialized advising for students of color by noting 1) opportunities for historically underrepresented groups for STEM research or post-graduate programs; 2) high school pipeline programs; or 3) by linking to an identity center's website as part of their advising descriptions. *Celebrated College* used the opportunity to orient faculty to academic advising on their website to refer advisors with a hyperlink to the identity centers on campus. Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) students certainly had opportunities to engage in cohort-based programming on these campuses. Yet, for three-quarters of the sample, these groups were not explicitly mentioned in the academic advising realm or were not mentioned at all. See Table 4 for a full list of the cohorts/populations mentioned for specialized support.

Table 4

Frequency of Discernable Mention of or Support for "Special" Populations

"Special" Population	Included in the Primary AA site (or subpages) or Linked from It to Another	Included in the Parent Site (or subpages) or Linked from It to Another	Support Offered but Not Mentioned or Linked from Primary AA or Parent Site	Total [on AA or Parent Sites / Overall]
Low-Income	Foremost C. Distinguished U. Prestigious U. Spectacular U. Respected U. Unsurpassed U.	Reputable C. Quality C. Stupendous C. Superior C. Exceptional U.	Stellar C. Outstanding C. Top-Notch C. Esteemed U. Extraordinary U. Preeminent U.	11/17
FGCS	Distinguished U. Respected U. Spectacular U. Unsurpassed U.	Reputable C. Quality C. Stupendous C. Superior C. Exceptional U.	Celebrated C. Outstanding C. Stellar C. Esteemed U. Extraordinary U. Preeminent U. Prestigious U.	9/16
ADA Accommodations	Reputable C. Stellar C. Respected U.	Outstanding C. Quality C. Stupendous C. Top-Notch C. Preeminent U.	Celebrated C. Prominent C. Superior C. Prestigious U. Unsurpassed U.	8/13
Transfers	Top-Notch C. Exceptional U. Distinguished U. Preeminent U. Prestigious U. Remarkable U. Respected U. Spectacular U. Unsurpassed U.		Stellar C.	9/10
BIPOC		Prominent C. Reputable C. Esteemed U. Exceptional U.	Celebrated C. Stellar C. Extraordinary U. Respected U.	5/10

		Preeminent U.	Spectacular U.	
Wellness Support	Prestigious U. Unsurpassed U.	Outstanding C. Reputable C. Stellar C. Exceptional U. Preeminent U.	Celebrated C.	7/8
International	Superior C. Prestigious U. Unsurpassed U.	Reputable C. Stupendous C.	Celebrated C. Stellar C. Top-Notch C.	5/8
DACA		Stupendous C.	Celebrated C. Outstanding C. Extraordinary U. Prestigious U.	1/5
Athletes	Exceptional U. Respected U. Unsurpassed U.	Reputable C.		4/4
Religious/Spiritual		Reputable C.	Celebrated C. Stellar C. Extraordinary U.	¼
Multilingual Speakers	Quality C.	Prestigious U. Stupendous C.		3/3
Nontraditional Age	Foremost C. Prestigious U.			2/2
LGBTQIA+		Stupendous C.	Celebrated C.	½
Veterans			Extraordinary U. Prestigious U.	0/2
Title IX		Reputable C.		1/1
Female			Stellar C.	0/1

Note: The table lists the frequency of "specialized" advising or advising for "special populations" included in the website text on or as a hyperlink to another site from 1) the primary academic advising site or a subpage of the primary site; 2) the parent page of the primary academic advising site or a subpage of the parent site; 3) a site other than the primary academic advising site or its parent page, but noted on a "For Students" or "New Students" site. Transfer students were most often mentioned on the primary academic advising site, and low-income students were most frequently mentioned overall. FGCS and low-income students were often referred to as "FLI" students. Mention of BIPOC students were almost always for pre-college or post-graduate opportunity programs. Several HEI

sites about FLI student support featured images of students of color. A cohort/population could have been listed on another section of the HEI website (e.g., I did not perform an extensive search but rather followed links from the primary academic advising site, its parent site, the HEI homepage, and the HEI's "For Students" or "New Students" pages in searching for specific cohorts). *Unsurpassed U.* included the most "specialized advising" references from or on their primary academic advising site. For a data visualization of the mentioned populations, see Appendix F, Figures 22 and 23.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

One goal of this study was to clarify the role of academic advising and understand how it is viewed by and offered at 20 highly selective, private liberal arts institutions. In this institutional context, descriptions of advising on institutional websites partly explained how advising helps students engage in the liberal learning process and meet their learning objectives. Academic advising appears essential for institutions in the sample, as evidenced by the attention paid to the academic advising descriptions and design of the primary advising websites. These websites enable users to learn about the people or groups of people involved in advising and other resources in the overall advising system, often referred to as an advising community or network.

Another goal of the research was to discover if these institutions on their websites intentionally addressed (in)equities in higher education through pedagogical and tactical resource approaches in their academic advising practices. The findings showed that some "special populations" were directly mentioned for enhanced advising and support—most notably transfer students and first-generation and low/lower-income students, often grouped as "FLI" students. Students needing ADA accommodations, international students, athletes, and non-traditional age students were mentioned less frequently. BIPOC students were not directly referenced on any primary advising sites and were mentioned on five parent sites; they were mentioned as frequently as transfer students, but transfer students were mentioned on nine primary advising sites.

Academic advising is a misunderstood resource (McMutrie & Supiano, 2022). It is sometimes thought to be only for and designed as restricted to assisting with course selection, declaring a major, and degree completion (Howlett & Rademacher, 2023) and not for building mentoring relationships with students (Allen & Smith, 2008; Barber, 2020). However, the advising practices in my sample were often described as accomplishing much more. These practices were also said to align with the institutional context of an HEI's curriculum, co-curriculum, and student composition. The findings confirm that the academic advising purpose statements convey topics and capacities for supporting students with designing their educational pathway and providing holistic advising at these institutions; however, the most frequently supported tangible advising approaches were for supporting students in the "pre-major" years, choosing a major, and meeting graduation requirements. The websites also described institutional aspirations: that students will reach out when needed; and that students can count on having mentoring relationships with professors, advisors who refer students to multiple resources, and people who readily assist students in their journey of discovery and growth. Institutions also celebrated their compositional campus diversity and made concerted efforts to reflect "diversity" in the websites with text descriptions and students' images, if not necessarily their stories. In the images, compositional diversity was represented by including students from different racial, gender, and religious backgrounds; however, I did not find any photos of students with physical disabilities (e.g., in a wheelchair or using crutches). When student stories were shared online, the stories were nearly always compositionally diverse in terms of race, gender, socioeconomic status, inclusion of international students, and college-generation status. Some stories, particularly from students who self-identified as FGCS, described moments of uncertainty and loneliness.

While the first year advising typology described new students receiving one assigned advisor, care was taken to introduce students to the myriad of advising resources available on the various websites I reviewed. The descriptions of advising's purposes were overwhelmingly aligned with encouraging students to embrace liberal learning by exploring the curriculum and discovering new modes of thought and opportunities (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005; Lowenstein, 2005, 2020; Puroway, 2016). The array of advising resources, advising referrals, and intentionally shaped advising communities echoed support for developmental advising models (Chickering, 1999) campus-wide, matching the shift in the academic advising literature from individualized to systemic approaches for holistic support (McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022; NACADA, 2023; Troxel et al., 2021). One college and three universities directly referenced best practices offered by NACADA. A few schools offered step-by-step expectations for each college year; others encouraged self-reflection about intellectual growth, personal challenges, and evolving goals during college (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

Individualized pathways and pedagogies (Astin, 1999) are central to the design of institutions with open curricula. But even the institutions with core curricular programs used language to describe how students design unique pathways through learning. If individual journeys are best supported with guidance and relational advising/mentoring, some descriptions of how students build relationships indicated tactical approaches for individualized learning—perhaps the small college's site that mentioned how advising could extemporaneously take place during dinner or how the residence halls of larger institutions offer relationship-building moments. One college offered students the chance to build an online portfolio to share aspects of themselves and their goals that can be shared with advisors in the program described on the site.

Promising the Continuity of Advising

All HEI academic advising sites conveyed the importance of the continuity of advising from enrollment to completion and planning for career/post-graduate life. Descriptions were intent on indicating that relationships—sometimes interchangeably using "mentoring" as the relationship type—were bound to form with faculty or peer advisors. Primary role/professional advisors were positioned as people who readily answered questions through drop-in advising, virtual appointments, or quick email replies. This advising continuity was presented as logical and aligned with the premise of liberal learning being a process of intellectual discovery and personal growth; some schools mentioned how students would undoubtedly face difficulties, but advisors can help students overcome them. Some HEI websites used technology to aid in the sorting and exploration of courses and majors, or for finding people in other units/campus resources. A few schools used a three-party vendor for students to track their degree completion or for online self-reflection using an e-portfolio or other tool.

Comparing Advising Approaches Between Colleges and Universities

I could not infer substantial variation in the academic advising philosophies, strategies, and tactics between the 10 colleges and 10 universities, perhaps because I chose to limit my search to the College of Arts and Sciences at larger universities. Some of the colleges, either directly in text or implied through images, conveyed the diversity of people and resources and an intimate living–learning environment that ensured the forming of close relationships. I had expected colleges to speak less frequently about research opportunities, but this was not the case. Four universities mentioned overseeing advising efforts through an advising center, and three universities stated the importance of advising tied to their residential community system; I inferred that larger institutions made known their attempts to provide coordinated support and

opportunities for relationships outside the classroom. I noticed how both school types assured students that they would meet helpful people and be part of a supportive community. Of course, I could not determine how "true" these statements were, but it is noteworthy that almost all the academic advising websites emphasized personal relationships on the landing page; some of these relationship indicators are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

Examples of Describing the Potential for Supportive Advising Relationships

Outstanding College: Mentioned a dean of wellbeing on their primary advising page. Advising scenarios for advisors highlighted situations where students faced challenges such as loneliness, mental health struggles, or worrying about money. Introduced a new student-to-staff mentoring program.	*Esteemed University:* Assured students on the primary site and in the division head's welcome message that all students would be known individually.
Top-Notch College: Prominently discussed its large peer advising network that provides multifaceted support and programming; a recently established advising center was also mentioned.	*Spectacular University:* Various advisors were described as equipped and available for students during every phase of the college journey.
Stellar College: Described a widespread peer academic mentoring program. An optional	*Unsurpassed University:* Described robust residential communities. Shared multiple

pre-orientation program provided opportunities for in-depth discussions about personal identities.	stories about the transition to college from a compositionally diverse group of students. Explained how academic advisors are available to students during challenging times.
Foremost College: Learning was described as occurring alongside faculty genuinely committed to supporting students' exploration process.	*Exceptional University:* Featured advising systems tied to the residential colleges and a peer mentoring network. Faculty advisors associated with the residential colleges were described as playing an advising and mentoring role. The advising website provided a list of talking points to discuss with advisors.
Prominent College: Shared the advantages of its small size for building relationships. Academic advising was described as continuous from enrollment to graduation. Provided live and recorded sessions with peer advisors prior to new student arrival about choosing courses and other topics.	*Respected University:* Offered multiple advisors (faculty, professional staff, peers) through a residential college system. Recruitment pages for residential advisors included as a benefit the opportunity to form relationships with undergraduates.
Superior College: Featured an advising program with a portfolio component to share	*Preeminent University:* Provided videos with professional advisors at an advising center

with others detailing students' learning goals and reflections.	about academic advising and a list of what to expect and plan for year to year.
Stupendous College: Academic advising was described as a network of support where each student is at the center of it. The new student orientation was described as getting to know students' academic and personal interests and goals.	*Remarkable University:* Had an advising center committed to working with students through a network of support provided from enrollment to graduation. Provided assurance that faculty and professional advisors are oriented to be helpful whenever needed.
Celebrated College: Provided links to campus identity centers in the faculty advisor pages to inform advisors of cohort-organized communities; advising scenarios for advisors presented stories from diverse students. Explained to students how college is different from high school in that students need to be proactive and should build relationships with their assigned advisors.	*Extraordinary University:* Provided an extensive list and description of academic advising opportunities and programs for BIPOC students on a parent website.
Reputable College: Explained how all first-year students would be matched with a pre-major advisor and an advising dean. Academic coaches were available without	*Distinguished University:* Assured students of advising continuity through the coordination of advising for new students and sophomores from an advising center. The advising center

limitations. Students could expect "partnerships" with several advisors.	offered learning skills workshops and regularly met with students for advising appointments.
Quality College: Touted its intimate living and learning environment and how faculty regularly eat meals with students. Advising comes naturally and is embedded in the culture of the community. A program for FLI students featured the relationship and guidance from a faculty member and as central to the program.	*Prestigious University:* Described communities of advisors, including faculty, advising deans, peer advisors, advising programs, and an advising center dedicated to helping students navigate the environment and resources available.

The net impact of reviewing sites from these colleges and universities demonstrated how advising is a relationship-building activity through formally assigned advisors before and after declaring a major. While some schools offered online advising and tools to support tracking degree progress, all schools in the sample intentionally mentioned the advising network/community, a faculty group, or professional and peer advisors for whom students could access along with the array of offices, centers, and other resources available; student could learn about these people and resources through hyperlinks or upon direct referral from one of their assigned advisors. Advising connections were described as relationship-rich rather than transactional; advisors were expected to provide holistic support by making referrals; and advisors would be proactive in helping students face challenges.

Faculty were frequently mentioned in the advising role, and they were described as

teaching students about curricular options and liberal learning goals (Hemwall & Trachte, 1999, 2005; Lowenstein 2005; Puroway, 2016). Notably, faculty and others were mentioned as being equipped to provide the "developmental" advising students need to navigate their transition to college, moments of intellectual and personal growth, and personal challenges (Baxter Magolda, 2009; Chickering, 1999). Additionally, the emphasis on the multitude of resources conveyed how an advising community or network could collectively provide holistic support for students (NACADA, 2024b; Whitely et al., 2018). However, building relationships with faculty advisors and others on campus can be difficult for students from minoritized backgrounds (Jack, 2019). Also, advising and mentoring are misunderstood practices (Jacobi, 1991; McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022), though mentoring has been tied to academic success (Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, 2023) and is critical for supporting integrated learning (Barber, 2020). As the sample websites described formally assigned advisors for pre-major and major advising and opportunities for students to build additional or informal advising relationships, HEIs should consider renaming the overall activity, system, or approach to include mentoring (e.g., "academic advising and mentoring" or "advising and mentoring communities"). Not all advisors will be mentors, but directly messaging the importance of faculty and others who mentor students perhaps aligns more logically with the stated assurances of HEI support for students' intellectual growth and personal development.

Relationships and Self-Reliance

As mentioned above and evidenced by data in Table 5, academic advising was typically described as an experience for engaging in advising conversations, and some instances included the expectation that students would be "partners" in the advising process. Students were described as needing to be "open-minded" about developing advising relationships with faculty.

One school assured student that their individualized academic journey and personal goals would be supported by advisors committed to their development and fulfilling their dreams.

Additionally, many statements about the learning process asserted that students would learn to be "self-directed" and "independent thinkers." Many statements also included the need for students to be "proactive about their situation." For optimal academic advising, the aggregate messages seemed to convey that advisors supported individualized educational goals and were readily available; however, students were responsible for taking advantage of available resources. Astin's theory of student involvement (1999) argued that college pedagogical frameworks either engage students in academic content learning (led by faculty), with resource offerings (provided by staff), or with individualized learning pathways for each student. How whole advising systems offer equitable support for individualized learning and talent development (Cahalan et al., 2022) is both a goal and a challenge for academic advising systems at highly selective institutions, and perhaps especially at large research universities (Mu & Foshnacht, 2019). Moreover, minoritized student populations, particularly students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, can experience elite learning environments as alienating and difficult for building relationships with faculty and others (Jack, 2019). Some scholars contend that academic advising is not the same as mentoring, which known in the literature as supporting student development and academic success (Barber, 2020; Jacobi, 1991). This topic will be discussed more in the last chapter.

Two colleges and two universities listed information about time off from college from the HEI's primary advising site, and a few sites contained information about academic probation and leaves of absence. While difficulties were part of the language describing student experiences, these stories were not prominent aspects of the sites I viewed. One data point that stands out is

the six-year completion rate for HUG groups (Alaskan Native and Native American, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander) at the sample universities: for the Fall 2015 entering cohort, the completion rate was eight percentage points lower than the general population—87% vs. 95%. This cohort would have finished in five years at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and six years in the middle of it (Spring 2021). Additionally, the multiple "pandemics'' that occurred during this period—the coronavirus (Soria et al., 2020), disproportionate concerns about food and housing insecurity among Latinx and other low-income communities (Goldrick-Rab, 2023), xenophobia and violence directed against Asians/Asian Americans (Fischer, 2021), the Black Lives Matter movement, and the intensification of the mental health crisis were among the reasons for institutional responses to supporting students vulnerable to these societal realities. Evidence of support for food security was mentioned on some websites linked to the primary academic advising site, and 10 schools mentioned emergency funds or financial support services. Several sites directly mentioned counseling and psychological services. While academic coaching models are offered at some of the sample schools, the case management model for academic advising (Lawton, 2018) was not mentioned in these publicly facing webpages.

Holistic/Multifaceted Advising for FLI Students

Other than support for transfer students, the primary academic advising or their parent websites mentioned most often the presence of "specialized" advising for first-generation college and limited/low-income students; in most instances, these two identities were combined and called "FLI" students. The academic advising delivery for this intersectional cohort was sometimes offered outside of academic affairs (e.g., in student affairs, multicultural affairs, or partnerships with outside organizations). Including these institutional efforts, all but three of the

sample institutions (17) mentioned providing enhanced advising support for FLI students. Notably, coordinated advising support for FLI students occurred in a separate "success" center or through programming offered by outside partner organizations.

Given the federal regulations for excluding race as a special category in postsecondary admissions processes, it is perhaps unsurprising that BIPOC or historically underrepresented/minoritized student groups are not the focus of specialized advising; five HEIs mentioned BIPOC student programs on the parent site, and the programs referenced pre-college summer experiences or post-graduate fellowship opportunities. Yet Mu and Foshnacht's (2019) study found that: 1) noted gains on the impact of academic advising were higher at baccalaureate versus doctoral institutions and for students in majors outside the arts/humanities; 2) students with parental education levels of high school or below had higher perceived gains than continuing college students; and 3) Black and Hispanic students reported higher satisfaction gains with the frequency of advising meetings than White students. Whereas COFHE institutions do not grapple with the national college completion imperative as urgently, HUG-minoritized student groups face challenges such as stereotype threat (Steele, 2010) and, as described in the literature on BIPOC students at PWIs (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Jack & Black, 2022), microaggressions (Ogunyemi et al., 2020) and racism. Explicit institutional support for first generation college and low-/limited-income students may be easier to justify in part because of the racial diversity of these student populations. The support for FLI and BIPOC students was augmented by partnerships with outside nonprofit or governmental programs (e.g., the Kessler Scholars Collaborative and federal TRIO programs for FLI students; the Mellon Mays Fellowship and McNair Scholars Program for students of color interested in entering the professoriate). Using the "Wayback Machine" tool (Internet Archive, n.d.), I noted how "FLI"

support at the sample schools was not mentioned in 2015. An “1vyG” network of FLI students started forming in the 2015–16 academic year (EdMobilizer, n.d.; Pappano, 2018).

Equity-Focused Advising for Accessing Liberal Learning

The primary academic advising purpose statements often described how advising linked to liberal learning goals and the learning process. However, tactically, these connections were not directly described on the websites. For example, there was some programming about liberal education and how to engage students in reflecting on their learning process. Career outcomes were heavily promoted as a certainty after graduation. Yet there are various reasons why all college students, and minoritized students in particular, misunderstand the goals of liberal education (Fischmann & Gardner, 2022; Shelton, 2023). Concerns about marketability and return on investment have led to declining enrollment in humanities courses and majors (Heller, 2023; Schmidt, 2018). College debt is a deterrent to exploring jobs not perceived as viable for paying off loans. Black and Latinx college students disproportionately battle debt (Schumer & Warren, 2020). Students from families with incomes under $30,000 have difficulty repaying debt because only half earn more than $25,000 five years after graduation (Charron-Chenier et al., 2020).

Elucidating the Liberal Learning and Post-College Connection

Many students fear exploring the curriculum or studying areas they love because they believe they will not secure a sustainable career pathway if they follow their passions (Schmidt, 2018). NACE annually reports on skills gained by liberal arts graduates regardless of college major; NACE (2021) published a guide on competencies for career readiness. Yet many students across the demographic spectrum think it is of little value to enroll in upper-level classes in the humanities, let alone major in them (Heller, 2023; Schmidt, 2018). I am particularly concerned about students who believe they simply cannot afford to study an arts or humanities area,

believing doing so would lead to financial insecurity. In addition, I am worried that college educators do not adequately advise students about how arts and humanities majors can serve students well in preparation for careers *and* life. For example, students learn about the value of summer internships in college, only to discover that several industries routinely offer unpaid internships (Busteed, 2021); several sample HEIs mentioned the availability of monetary awards for unpaid summer internship experiences. In addition, college career advisors tout the importance of social networks and networking. Still, students can find these concepts and skills foreign or alienating if their families are not from the professional class (Jack, 2019).

Communication Typologies

My study's initial intent was to examine website content as a practical mechanism to gather data units on the sites to understand institutional explanations of academic advising and find support indicators for diverse student populations. Yet viewing HEI websites also necessitates considering institutional communications and their large social context (Krippendorff, 2019). When viewed for their dialogic functionality, I could categorize the sample's advising sites into four types: "the basics," "the roadmap," "the guide," and "my education, my journey" (see Table 6 for a summary).

"The Basics"

"The basics" advising websites provided fundamental information about advising programs and resources similarly to a hard-copy pamphlet. One site linked directly to the school catalogue for current students and faculty that outlines the academic policies and programs. This type of site described academic advising services such as pre-major and major advising and provided a directory of people and offices. The text on *Extraordinary University's* and *Stellar College's* sites explained how academic advising supports learning and growth. Both sites

encouraged students to stay connected to their advisors without a specific reason or context. The sites also listed a method for scheduling appointments or finding drop-in hours, a main email address, and a phone number. However, these sites did not connect the dots as to how advising could benefit students.

"The Roadmap"

This site typology described academic advising purposes and outlined what students could expect from advising and learning milestones. Sites explained the roles and backgrounds of specific people involved and when they met with students. The primary advising site was well-organized in terms of advising types and offices, and it listed several forms of advising beyond pre-major and major advising. Also, the "roadmap" sites directed students from specific "special" populations to specific resources; for example, a couple of institutions listed an online directory of faculty and staff who identified as FGCS. The sites were designed for easy navigation and information; however, the pages did not portray an in-depth engagement and interaction with the reader.

"The Guide"

Websites matching this type contained "The Roadmap" elements and included stories from students, faculty, and staff about "how advising works" (some sites used this phrase) and how learning occurs. The advising descriptions used direct language describing holistic support. Some of these sites provided tech tools for self-monitoring degree progress. "Specialized" advising was conveyed as using asset-based approaches for supporting students working through challenges. Frameworks such as a "hidden curriculum" were explicitly mentioned, and instances of translating the learning process and environment were visible. Some examples of this type were the sites for *Exceptional University, Respected University,* and other schools listed in Table

6. Addressing the reader by "you," the sites offered milestones, tech tools to aid in exploration, stories from students about their experiences, and encouragement to tackle challenges by talking to someone in the advising community.

"My Education, My Journey"

None of the public-facing websites accessible to me fully offered themselves for engaging with a student as a human being could. One of the schools, *Unsurpassed University,* offered several advising stories from students from a variety of identity backgrounds. This HEI also mentioned the most cohorts for specialized advising (seven). *Unsurpassed University* also provided academic and personal learning milestones by year, and questions to guide students in reflecting on their experiences. For these reasons, *Unsurpassed University's* academic advising website came closest to providing dialogic support for the intellectual and personal development journey through college.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has entered the advising and counseling realm (Coffey, 2023; GTPE Communications, 2016) and common usage of predictive analytics may be on the horizon (Gagliardi, 2022). Some websites I viewed offered references to tools such as "My [Name of Institution]" portals for students to self-select institutional links and web apps related to their academic and social experiences. A few schools used a third-party platform for students to track their progress toward degree completion. Using AI to improve students' connection to academic support, advising resources, and social networks offer institutions the potential to tailor specific advice and opportunities to individual students' expressed interests and needs (Ciburn, 2022; Georgia Tech, 2019, 2020; Nietzel, 2022; Papaspyridis, 2020). For an example of an imagined prototype using AI, see Appendix I.

Table 6

Academic Advising Website Typologies of the Sample Websites

Typology	Representative Schools	Examples of Typology
"The Basics"	*Distinguished University* *Extraordinary University* *Foremost College* *Prestigious University* *Reputable College* *Stellar College*	Provided little information about advising on the website and relied on a direct link to the school catalogue. Advising programming beyond the first year was not clearly stated. Advising was described as everywhere. Programs and offices were mentioned but not how students are supposed to engage with them.
"The Roadmap"	*Esteemed University* *Outstanding College* *Quality College* *Remarkable University* *Prominent College* *Spectacular University* *Stupendous College*	Referred to various functions of the academic advising dean's office through a list of links. Emphasized the exploration of learning and described pre-major advising, major advising, and general advising offered by the advising deans. Advising for fellowships, careers, and study abroad were linked to the site.

		The primary site directly tied academic advising to academic success. The site was well-organized for navigation to primary advising actors: pre-major and major advising, an advising center, and three types of pre-professionals advising.
"The Guide"	*Celebrated College* *Exceptional University* *Preeminent University* *Respected University* *Superior College* *Top-Notch College*	Offered extensive advice for students for learning milestones and personal reflection for each year of college. In the training resources for faculty, DEI was a central point, and the site made direct referrals to various identity centers and other resources on campus. The primary advising site used straightforward language and icons to describe different facets of advising and how the school organized support for choosing classes and majors, building academic skills, seizing co-curricular opportunities, and obtaining

		support for personal challenges. The dialogic approach seeks to translate the many facets of advising the school offers.
"My Education, My Journey"	*Unsurpassed University*	Featured elements of "The Guide" plus additional methods for reading stories about students and their journeys. Actively encouraged self-reflection with detailed prompts designed for learning milestones and experiences year to year. (The potential for interactive elements on websites and social media and tailoring advice and resources for students using AI technologies are opportunities on the horizon of advising and support.)

Note: The indicator descriptions were taken from the researcher's HEI spreadsheets and discerned by the organization of the HEI's primary academic advising landing page, which was stored as a screenshot.

The content analysis of my data from sample academic advising websites (text, images, other multimedia, and choices for its overall design and organization; Nielsen, 2020) could not

determine if the identified website typologies accurately represented how advising occurs in practice at these schools from advisees' and advisors' perspectives. Rather, the data communicated typologies that indicated the academic advising purposes and how advising is supposed to "work" from the institution's point of view (Krippendorff, 2019). The data and analysis provide a perspective on what website users might infer about what students can expect from academic advising as well as the institution's expectations for student engagement with the HEI's resources and opportunities (Evangelopoulos et al., 2012; Hodge et al., 2020; Whitley et al., 2018).

The sites available to me may not have included campus-only interactive features that tailor and target advising approaches and resources based on students' self-expressed needs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the University of Michigan created a student-facing dashboard in the Canvas learning management system to support students' ability to plan their assignments across the courses and track their progress during the semester (Mowreader, 2024). Georgia Tech's AI assistant "Jill Watson" has been effective in connecting students to each other in one large online course, and the avatar has been deployed as a teaching assistant in other classes (Georgia Tech, 2019, 2020). Chatbots have been in use at Georgia Tech and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to connect students to information and campus resources (Ciburn, 2022). In addition to opt-in AI platforms, predictive analytics can be deployed to proactively support students upon enrollment (Papaspyridis, 2020). However, higher education must examine the ethics of AI and its intended use to support students without violating their privacy or worse, surveilling them (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Given concerns about deep fakes, gender/racial/socioeconomic bias, surveillance, and how user technologies often exclude users in the design process, HEIs must include input and feedback from diverse and minoritized students in the development of these

AI-focused approaches intended to help students (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

Future Research

Higher education should provide students with the agency, or the capabilities, to influence their learning environment and learning pathways (Klemenčič, 2017). Future research about academic advising websites as indicators for support for diverse populations at highly selective liberal arts institutions could adopt a qualitative approach to understand 1) how diverse student populations view their educational experience and use academic advising to support it and 2) how diverse student populations find out about advising (e.g., through websites, social media, email communications, their peers, their instructors, or otherwise). Additionally, qualitative data about faculty perspectives on their advising role at colleges versus universities (if there is a difference), how faculty regard how advising is described on websites, and quantitative data detailing institutional resource allocations could have implications for supporting faculty and systemic resource allocation decisions. Research about how academic advising affects students' decision-making about their course plans, major choice, and participation in high-impact practices (i.e., how students choose to explore and take advantage of liberal learning experiences) would benefit how institutions deploy advising to support learning processes for all and especially minoritized student populations. As AI technologies become more prevalent in higher education, their use in supporting students from pre-enrollment to completion alongside human(ized) advisors and advising communities could positively affect how HEIs effectively support diverse and minoritized students. Finally, as students who face challenges to persistence are hidden from the view of how HEI websites present the full experience of college, qualitative research about how students benefit from micro messaging (Buchanan et al., 2022; Hodge et al., 2020; Page et al., 2023) and advising would have significant implications for helping students

face these challenges.

Chapter Summary

The major themes emerging from the content analysis for the academic advising websites and their parent sites from the 20 colleges and universities in this study included the promise of the continuity of advising, the possibility of advising relationships akin to mentoring experiences with faculty and peers, and holistic advising support provided by several people and aspects of the school's advising system. While holistic advising support was conveyed for all students, details about how such support occurs was most pronounced in advising for first-generation college and low-income "FLI" students. Some institutions partnered with third-party organizations to provide this support.

The evidence of academic advising as a systemic phenomenon follows the current trend to frame and practice academic advising as a campus-wide activity (NACADA, 2024b; Troxel et al., 2021). The promise of advising relationships, however, also hinges on students' willingness and ability to be self-directed, self-reflective, and advocates for themselves. On these websites, advising was aligned with academic "success" and the journey of liberal learning. Ensuring that all students have equitable access to the liberal learning process is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: MISSION-DRIVEN STRATEGY FOR ACTION

Introduction

Emerging from student development theory, the academic advising discourse began with conceptualizing the ideal methods and outcomes for one-on-one advising conversations between students and faculty advisors. Today, the field addresses the need for coordinated advising systems across faculty, primary-role advisors, and peers working within specific programs or offices that collectively aim to provide holistic support for diverse student populations. The websites in the study described specific tactical approaches for coordinated support, including advisors making resource referrals within the campus advising network, explaining the different types of advising available (e.g., pre-major, within the major, career-related, for study abroad), and offering scenarios on websites for advisors to help them empathize with students and the multifaceted concerns their advisees may raise, from loneliness to worries about money. The academic advising websites from the highly selective liberal arts institutions in this study collectively displayed a desire for students to embrace the exploration and discovery process, and they promised that several advisors/mentors/coaches along the way would support students' journeys.

The national discussion about equity gaps in college completion places its hopes on academic advising to mitigate them. For the institutions in the study, the six-year completion rates are some of the highest in the nation; however, the universities in the sample had lower completion rates by eight percentage points for historically underrepresented racial group (HUG) students as compared to the campuses' general populations for the Fall 2015 cohort. Moreover, minoritized students experience feelings of alienation and isolation that have been documented in

the literature. To understand equity gaps in the context of elite colleges, other concepts in addition to academic success should be the focus of academic advising; institutions should examine how students *experience* academic persistence and social belonging, along with how academic advising can support the whole student experience. These understandings require qualitative data that can be systematically collected and discussed.

My research asked a fundamental question: in the context of some of the most selective colleges in the United States, what exactly is academic advising? How do these institutions describe their purposes and goals, and how is academic advising organized and implemented? The sample web pages readily embraced a "developmental, academic advising" philosophy aligned with, in most instances, the school's liberal arts curriculum; in fact, these descriptions promised that liberal learning was an opportunity for new students to discover areas of study and aspects of themselves beyond their imagination. Individual advisors for new students—their primary advisor and others in the school's academic advising community, whether they be assigned class deans or faculty affiliated with a residence hall—were described as equipped to support students holistically. Advisors were considered ready to refer students to other campus resources within the advising network. As students embarked on their journeys and reached milestones in their educational path, the initially assigned advisor or others in the advising community were positioned by the website descriptions to provide continuous support. Some schools listed anticipated learning milestones by class year and who would be available to help students beyond their first-year experience. The sample academic advising websites communicated institutional promises for support; how well they communicated the learning process beyond choosing a major, the deeper and tangible meanings of liberal arts education, and how students should tackle academic and personal challenges was less evident.

The most detailed, holistic support was described for an intersectional cohort, FLI students. Notably, some institutions have decided to offer programming outside of the formal academic advising system through an adjacent academic success center or by partnering with a third-party organization. In studying these websites, I discerned a broad-reaching commitment to mitigating equity gaps institutionally, if not necessarily through academic advising. If academic advising is to be aligned with how educators hope all students from diverse populations learn, how institutions ensure advising continuity beyond the first year and for declaring a major could be more explicitly outlined. If all students, regardless of background, can expect to develop mentoring relationships with faculty and participate in high-impact learning experiences such as research, how institutions take responsibility for ensuring these significant opportunities could have been clearer. Another point not explicitly stated was how students might experience and seek out support for uncertainty and academic failure. Also, if liberal learning results in readiness for careers in a rapidly changing knowledge economy, students might doubt such a claim. Though referred to in passing, how faculty and professional advisors help mitigate the national mental health crisis among adolescents and young adults was not overtly communicated in the online explanations of holistic support. Indeed, there are limitations in studying website content, given my inability to measure the reception of the information provided or observe advising support in practice. However, messages not overtly stated are worthy of discussion, particularly within institutional commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Academic advising should translate hidden curricula and empathize with students who feel alienated by the majority environment or struggle due to extenuating personal or societal circumstances. Connecting the tactical opportunities on websites for how academic advising teaches students to meet milestones and face challenges would contribute to students' understanding of how advising can help them.

Institutional leaders are reflecting on the more recent stress and strain felt by instructional faculty and student-facing staff following COVID-19. Research has revealed how low-income students have grappled with joblessness and food and housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab, 2023; Soria et al., 2020), and higher education has reckoned with highly publicized accusations of Title VI and Title IX violations. Instructional faculty and professional staff—the institution writ large—act *in loco parentis*. Academic advisors, not exclusively but essentially, serve as translators, guides, and advocates for students in learning about academic culture, navigating multiple resources, and figuring out how liberal learning connects to social mobility and personal and societal flourishing. Advisors witness how the student community experiences the learning and living environment.

Effectively Communicating Academic Advising's Core Purpose

Perhaps a reason for ambiguous explanations of academic advising on some of the sample's institutional websites (e.g., what purposes it serves, how it tactically operates from enrollment to graduation and beyond) relates to a professional field that is still evolving and adapting to adequately support a rapidly changing student population. No longer solely within the purview of instructional faculty, professional and peer advisors organized within advising success centers, residence halls, deans' offices, and DEI offices were some of the locations for these advising groups. The HEI websites in my study confirm there are many student populations who potentially benefit from advisors as cultural navigators (Strayhorn, 2015) and advocates (Barber, 2020; Lee, 2018)—FGCS, low or limited income students, non-U.S. residents, and nontraditional-age students, as well as continuing-college students from minoritized racial backgrounds, varsity athletes, transfer students, and students with learning differences or who battle mental health challenges. Moreover, the uncertain future of work has caused the public,

students, and their families to question the value of liberal learning (Bok, 2022; Heller, 2023; Schmidt, 2018). Institutional leaders, faculty, and practitioners should meticulously examine how we communicate what academic advising is and how it works on HEI websites, in admissions information sessions, during orientation events, and when advisors meet students for the first time. These large-scale and micro-messages matter and have a measurable impact on how current and prospective students understand their sense of place and agency (Acosta, 2020; Buchanan et al., 2022; Page et al., 2023; Whitley et al., 2018).

In *The Future of Advising: Strategies to Support Student Success* (McMurtrie & Supiano, 2022), four institutional case studies described how each of these HEIs either reorganized its decentralized academic advising structure at a large research university; developed an academic success coaching program; structured a uniform advising approach between faculty and primary-role advisors; and mapped out various learning pathways for students to aid them in seeing possibilities and planning. For large HEIs with multiple schools, there may be benefits to a centralized model, but even smaller institutions are at risk for siloed approaches or replicating the academic affairs—student affairs binary. If academic coaching provides enhanced support and structure for students with learning differences and others who are unfamiliar with college learning (Howlett & Rademacher, 2023), the challenge is scaling this resource-intensive approach. Leaders of academic advising should directly ask faculty advisors how they view their role and how their approaches and capacities may need greater support from professional advisors, colleagues in student affairs, or advising tools (e.g., technology portals, professional development sessions). Moreover, given institutional aspirations to equip students for lifelong learning, how the HEI advising system not only ensures the continuity advising beyond the first year but also for young graduates is a question for consideration. Moreover, advising

practitioners might ask if advising sessions, websites, or other opportunities for communicating with students help them see the possibilities for and benefits of high-impact practices and how institutional support helps access them. As well-endowed HEIs, schools like the ones in this study are positioned to offer coordinated support for the full promise of liberal learning for diverse and minoritized student populations.

In this chapter, I suggest that academic advisors and advising systems should more directly align with processes that support developing a thriving mindset (Schreiner, 2015, 2018) and what Barber (2020) called the integration of learning: that institutions translate how the integration of learning occurs so that students can seek out opportunities and support for themselves. In other words, the learning *process* should be clearly delineated in places like an academic advising primary site. I also posit that academic advising beyond the first year should actively support students in *the process of deciding* on their major or concentration, understanding the value of participating in high-impact practices, and navigating their intersectional identities and finding academic communities. For example, opportunities to directly engage in the reflection process while making these decisions and reaching learning milestones could be offered online through degree completion third-party platforms or in-house portfolio-building opportunities. Next, I suggest a process for guiding the alignment of academic advising with the integration of learning. I also recommend qualitative assessments of learning and advising that also supports students' intellectual growth and personal development. Additionally, I address how AI could be used to tailor advising approaches to address students' interests and needs, and I also suggest that the student voice be centered in how academic advising approaches and systems operate and are designed. Finally, I end with a note for leaders

and advisors about authentic listening, strategic communication, and setting short and long-term goals for aligning advising with institutional aspirations for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Aligning Academic Advising with the Liberal Learning Journey

Higher education institutions have become nimbler in describing and measuring learning outcomes. Even so, understandings of and methods for integrating liberal learning processes have yet to be widely discussed. In *Facilitating the Integration of Learning: Five Research-Based Practices to Help Students Connect Learning Across Disciplines and Lived Experience,* Barber (2020) reviewed his grounded theory of integration of learning. The book outlines five effective practices to support students. Barber's Integration of Learning Model includes three experiential phenomena during college: the *connection* of concepts across disciplines and contexts, the *application* of ideas and skills in new contexts, and the achievement of *synthesis* resulting in enhanced knowledge and new insights across disciplines and experiential domains (Barber, 2020).

The theory was developed from conducting and analyzing some interviews from the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education. The Wabash Study included 924 participants from 19 institutions interested in better understanding students' experiences with liberal education (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013). Barber (2020) noted that the interviews themselves served as a mode of self-reflection for students in the study. The qualitative, longitudinal research found empirical evidence for high-order, critical-thinking learning outcomes and student interest in lifelong learning and civic engagement. The study also demonstrated the cognitive impact of the liberal learning experience, as compared with students at research universities and regional institutions (using data from the National Survey of Student

Engagement), because of student exposure to "higher levels of instructional clarity and organization and more frequent deep-learning experiences" (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013, p. 10).

The Wabash Study's findings on the effects of "interactional diversity" and how the "extent of students' engagement with diverse peers, ideas, and socio-political and religious perspectives" (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013, p. 11) had a positive impact on deep learning measures for White students; in fact, these measures had more of an impact on White students than working with a faculty member on research, academic challenges, co-curricular involvement, or positive peer interactions. By contrast, students of color "derived no statistically significant critical thinking increases from engagement with diverse peers" (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013, p. 11). Given the literature on racial climates at PWIs, that the benefits of campus diversity were not shared across racial groups should not be surprising (Chatalin, 2018; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; National Council on Mental Health, 2017). The Wabash Study also found that co-curricular involvement and positive peer interactions impacted students of color and their cognitive development. Additionally, students with lower ACT scores benefited from interactional diversity and close study and research with faculty members. Given the evidence about how students of color experienced mentoring (Pascarella & Blaich, 2013) and benefited from high-impact practices (Finley & McNair, 2013), institutions should prioritize methods for building relationships with faculty and access to high-impact practices.

Integration of learning intentionally blurs the line between cognitive learning and personal development and refers to concepts such as meaning-making and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Barber (2020) argued that educators can facilitate integrated learning by offering structured opportunities for student reflection, mentoring for students, and writing experiences. Other research-based approaches that facilitate the integration of learning include

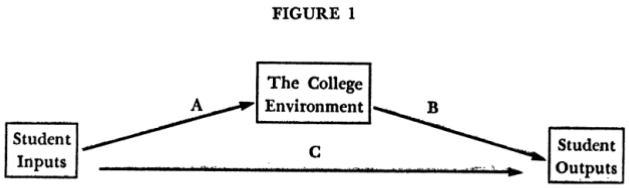
pedagogies that encourage juxtaposing disparate ideas and concepts, providing hands-on learning experiences, and incorporating diverse perspectives in learning environments. In considering academic advising as an equity-focused practice to mitigate equity gaps, the author did not attribute effective mentoring experiences to advising or what is possible during advising office hour sessions. Nevertheless, Barber (2020) referred to some mentors who serve as advocates or "institutional agents" who help students navigate complex campus systems and unfamiliar resources (pp. 55–56). One of the limitations of the book's suggestion for incorporating diverse perspectives is that minoritized student populations can experience alienating college environments (Chatelain, 2018; Jack, 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Another limitation of the research is its practical focus on one-on-one instruction or small group interactions, but not on how institutional systems and cultures can or should adopt integrative learning practices.

Student Development and Involvement

Liberal learning, exploration, and student transformation—the support that ideally accompanies these experiences and outcomes—recall the "developmental academic advising" paradigm from the early days in academic advising literature. The websites in my study explained how academic advising (ideally) supports student engagement in the learning environment, which results in positivist discoveries related to the world and themselves. The HEI website explanations of academic advising's purpose align well with Astin's (1970) theory of student involvement, or the "inputs and outputs" during college (p. 225). This theory is useful for framing how institutions consider students' pre-college inputs, the conditions in the college environment for motivating students, and how support systems can foster greater student engagement in achieving current and post-college goals.

Figure 11

Astin's Theory of College Student Involvement (Inputs and Outputs)



Note: From "The Methodology of Research on College Impact, Part I," by Alexander W. Astin, 1970, pp. 225 (https://doi.org/10.2307/2112065). Copyright 1970 by Sociology of Education.

For example, the consistently communicated acknowledgment of additional support for first-generation college and low/limited-income (FLI) students follows the logic of Astin's theory: FLI students come to college with different knowledge starting points about college; and with fewer social connections and financial resources than other students; therefore, colleges should acknowledge these differences and support students by providing enhanced and specific advising experiences (e.g., advising conversations about how college learning happens through group study, understanding sequential course progression, and other tips for success). Doing so will increase students' involvement and motivation, in addition to affecting their "output" or success in college. Action research questions about equity gaps in sense of belonging and college success, using student involvement theory as a framework, can be applied in several social contexts: how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced students' college enrollment and disparities by race and ethnicity (Soria et al., 2020); high-impact educational experiences that take into account students' racial identities (Harper, 2009; Harper & Kuykendall, 2012); and so forth. See Appendix J, Figure 25 for a visualization of the various factors affecting college students.

Along with the emerging discourse about academic advising systems, student development theory has also evolved—from describing how to support individualized positivist development to considering multicultural groups and their identity-focused formation, to finally acknowledging predominant institutional cultures and how schools should adapt to support diverse student populations by challenging norms of individuation (Abes & Wallace, 2020; Jack, 2019) and enlisting advisors as cultural navigators (Strayhorn, 2015). Chatlain, (2018) wrote about the "hidden curriculum" and what colleges and universities need to offer first-generation (and low-income) students for college success. She suggested that higher education should teach students how to form relationships with faculty and help them process the weight of being a role model in their home communities. Chatlain (2018) also offered a cautionary note:

> We cannot address inequality with a crash course on manners; we need more tutorials on power. First-generation advocates must listen to our students' critiques, take their protests seriously, and understand their perspective on what is lost when opportunities are gained. The reality is that no matter how well-intentioned such initiatives are, they are not a salve for the sting of racism and classism that has yet to be fully acknowledged, let alone confronted, in the academy. (Para. 12)

Well-endowed PWIs offer generous financial aid packages; they also charge some of the highest tuition in the country and enroll legacy and other students from family backgrounds who can afford full tuition and fees (Chetty et al., 2023; Porterfield, 2017). Students from under-resourced high schools and communities are potentially at risk for social isolation and separated from the fruits of mentoring relationships (Jack, 2019). Elite institutions share a history with ties to slavery (Brown University, 2006; Wilder, 2013) and the systemic exclusion of racial and ethnic groups (Karabel, 2006). In one study on racial climate at PWIs, roughly one in four

respondents believed there was “considerable” racial conflict on their campuses, especially at large state institutions (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 9). In the Diverse Learning Environments survey of 4,037 underrepresented minority students, more than half (55.4%) of Black/African American students experienced some level of exclusion while attending low-diversity institutions (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). More recently, anti-Asian hate crimes in the United States have been cause for alarm for international students (Fischer, 2021), and tensions amid campus activism related to the Fall 2023 escalation in the Middle East have prompted investigations from a U.S. Congressional House Committee on Education and the Workforce (Hartocollis, 2024). These realities do not discount the impact of DEI efforts at highly selective and other institutions; acknowledging these legacies and their ties to ongoing equity and inclusion efforts must sit at the heart of how institutions support the college experience for diverse student populations.

Positioning Academic Advising for Integrated Learning and Equity

A systemic process for understanding diverse and minoritized students’ academic experiences with college would help educators better understand equity gaps in the learning process, and how academic advising can potentially support learning connections, applications, and synthesis. Educators would then be better equipped to improve the academic advising system via a justice-oriented design that supports learning processes. Solutions for designing practices that enable access to profound learning experiences should incorporate knowledge from qualitative research data and use an iterative design-thinking process (Liedtka et al., 2021). However, the resources and labor involved in collecting, analyzing, and using qualitative data to inform leaders and practitioners of necessary improvements require an institutional commitment from executive/senior leadership.

Academic advising practices, programs, and systemic operations that robustly support students and their desired learning outcomes should follow the student's experience along their journey and foster their development. Academic advising should ensure equity-focused access to high-impact practices and feelings of belonging in the educational and social environment. Advising can and should contribute to universal access to integrative learning, VALUE outcomes (AAC&U, 2009), student career development/mobility, and student social and civic engagement readiness.

Developing a Shared Understanding of and Sense of Purpose for Advising

Asking foundational questions about how advisors and students understand what academic advising is and how its purpose is communicated and aligned with student expectations for their learning is key. Some questions about an HEI's academic advising philosophy, system, and practices include but are not limited to the following questions:

1. What is our shared sense of the purpose of academic advising? Do we explain its purpose to students and advisors in places like our website?
2. How does our institution ensure the continuity of academic advising/guidance after the first year? What is our approach to sophomore advising, advising for connections, applying learning in other contexts, and learning synthesis through students' college experience (enrollment to completion)?
3. What questions do or should we pose to students to provide guidance and an intentional process for reflecting on their evolving goals and during critical moments such as deciding on their major?

4. How do we teach students about the value of high-impact learning/practices? How do diverse student populations participate in them, and are we providing equitable access?
5. Designing, maintaining, and improving websites and other technical tools for advising requires expertise and resources. How vital is technology to facilitating our institution's academic advising processes? How effective are our digital communication efforts for engaging students? What digital tools do we aspire to develop and use?
6. How do faculty advisors expect professional advisors and others to assist them with providing high-quality and holistic academic advising to students?
7. How effectively do we collaborate across campus units to provide holistic support?
8. Do we have a comprehensive inventory of our academic advising resources? How can we analyze how advising websites and other communication tools present academic advising information that helps students (and other stakeholders) engage with advising?
    - How do students find and utilize academic advising resources?
    - What language do we use in our digital communications and advising sessions to encourage students to utilize our services? Are we using jargon that needs translation (e.g., what is a fellowship)? Do our sites use a dialogic approach that invites students to engage with us?

- Do our online tools help students reflect on their experiences and articulate goals? Do they help advisors develop relationships with students?
- Do our websites offer micro affirmations of support for diverse student populations?

Developing a Shared Understanding of Equity and Inclusion for Advising

Equity-focused strategic goals for how diverse student populations experience learning and advising support would require developing a shared understanding of institutional equity and inclusion goals and setting the stage for possible adaptive changes and innovation.

1. How does our institution currently define equity and inclusion? Does our division or unit actively use this framework when designing our services?
2. Do we delineate and mitigate equity gaps in not only six-year completion rates but also feeling a sense of belonging, participating in high-impact practices, achieving integrated learning, and experiencing personal fulfillment?
    - How do students experience the learning environment? What changes over time do students experience, and how are they supported?
    - Do students from minoritized backgrounds experience different rates of belonging in academic and social communities?
    - What are the participation rates in high-impact practices, and how can academic advising support more significant participation in them?
    - For students who encounter academic challenges, what advising practices best support these students?

3. Enhanced advising for FGCS and low-income ("FLI") students at highly selective institutions is a recent development. What are our current strategies for providing enhanced academic advising/guidance and support for diverse student populations? Do other cohorts need enhanced support that our system does not offer (e.g., HUG students, Asian American or International students studying the humanities and social sciences, female-identified students in STEM, students with executive function or social anxiety challenges, LGBTQIA+ students)?

Qualitative Assessment of the Learning Process and Advising Experience

The ongoing collection of qualitative data (student stories during their undergraduate journey) can and should inform executive leaders about resource allocations and unit leaders about priorities and (mis)alignment in an iterative process.

1. Do we collect more than satisfaction data about students' experience with advising? How have we used student data to improve our academic advising delivery? Do we actively include the student voice in our assessments?
2. Do we collect data about the faculty's experience advising students?
3. How can we receive ongoing qualitative information from students and advisors to improve the advising system and ensure that all students experience integrated learning? How can we gather reflections and feedback from students about their enrollment-to-completion experiences and how advising resources support students or are absent from their experiences?

Adaptive Change and Justice-Oriented Design

Those advocating for the longevity of the liberal arts in higher education have prioritized naming and evaluating student learning outcomes over the past decade (AAC&U, 2009).

However, knowing the best practices for designing supportive learning environments that *enable access* to formative learning *experiences* and how students make sense of the learning *process* necessitates qualitative research data from students, instructors, and academic advisors using an action research approach (Putnam & Rock, 2018) or a design-thinking process (Liedtka et al., 2021). Providing the resources and labor necessary for collecting, analyzing, and using qualitative data to inform leaders and practitioners of problems and possible solutions requires a commitment of human and financial resources (or resource redirection) from leadership and professional development of this practice. Qualitative data about how students experience learning is critical to supporting diverse student populations (Gagliardi, 2022; Meyerhoff, 2020). While qualitative research can be more time-consuming than quantitative studies, understanding the real-time situation from students' and advisors' perspectives can yield worthwhile information from a relatively small sample. The methodology of action research (Putnam & Rock, 2018) and design thinking processes (Liedtka et al., 2021; Nielsen, 2000) allow smaller sampling to test or prototype simple innovations.

Designing Equity-Focused Assessments and Including the Student Voice

When considering systemic-level implementation and the evaluation of learning experiences, accreditation (conducted by private, nonprofit entities) can serve as one accountability measure. Institutions can also take part in internal or external assessments to improve their practices and learning environments. Ewell (2009) summarized the difference between improvement and accountability assessments as shown in Table 6.

Table 7

Two Assessment Paradigms: Improvement and Accountability

Table 1

Two Paradigms of Assessment

	Assessment for Improvement Paradigm	Assessment for Accountability Paradigm
Strategic Dimensions		
Intent	Formative (Improvement)	Summative (Judgment)
Stance	Internal	External
Predominant Ethos	Engagement	Compliance
Application Choices		
Instrumentation	Multiple/Triangulation	Standardized
Nature of Evidence	Quantitative and Qualitative	Quantitative
Reference Points	Over Time, Comparative, Established Goal	Comparative or Fixed Standard
Communication of Results	Multiple Internal Channels and Media	Public Communication
Uses of Results	Multiple Feedback Loops	Reporting

Note. Sometimes called internal versus external "quality assurance" in the literature and in practice, assessment for *accountability* is used by U.S. state and federal departments of education and accreditation bodies. Assessment for *improvement* tends to be utilized by individual institutions or consortia. From *Assessment, accountability, and improvement: Revisiting the tension.* (Occasional Paper No. 1), by P. T. Ewell, 2009, p. 8 (https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OccasionalPaper1.pdf). Copyright 2009 by the University of Illinois and the University of Indiana, National Institute for Learning Outcomes and Assessment (NILOA).

U.S. higher education institutions experience significant autonomy, especially at the most well-endowed institutions. Ewell (2009) explained:

> [I]nstitutional accrediting organizations remain membership associations … so they cannot stray too far toward establishing common standards and applying them through aggressive review. They also remain extremely limited in their ability to influence most institutions not at risk of losing accreditation. The future effectiveness of institutional accreditation in promoting good practice and reinforcing the academy's assumption of consistent and transparent standards of student academic achievement lies entirely in the hands of the academy and its leadership. (p. 13)

For example, concerns have been growing about the ineffectiveness of accreditation in holding institutions accountable for ensuring their students' economic security and social mobility (Itzkowitz, 2022). Because the predominant ethos for accreditation is compliance, institutional leaders use internal research surveys to provide an additional quality assurance mechanism for providing transparency and as a method for improvement.

Institutions have become accustomed to surveying its students (Klemenčič & Chirikov, 2015). The "student engagement" paradigm has transcended cultural boundaries. Established in 2000 and updated in 2013, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has been used by more than 1,500 four-year colleges and universities. Internationally, higher education institutions in Australia, Canada, South Korea, China, Japan, New Zealand, Mexico, Ireland, South Africa, and the UK also use the survey instrument (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2016; Zilvinskis et al., 2017). Student engagement policy is tied to concerns about different completion rates; nevertheless, the survey's "student engagement" paradigm has been criticized for its performative nature and its usage in marketing institutions (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2016).

Equity-minded assessments require careful planning and collaboration (Hundley, 2023). The National Institute for Learning Outcomes and Assessment (NILOA) provides frameworks for culturally responsive assessments that are socially just, critically oriented, and equity-focused (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020). Equity-minded assessments center students on the approach:

> Including the voices of students, especially those who belong to minoritized populations or those whose voices can often be left unheard, throughout the assessment process… and [u]sing assessment to advance the pursuit of equity across previously identified institutional parameters [can] demonstrate disparate outcomes across student

> populations… Listening to the voices of those historically silent is an essential element of equity-minded assessment. (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020, pp. 9–10)

Assessments for improvement and accountability—and particularly to illuminate differences/differentials in completion rates, student engagement, and belonging should "respond visibly to domains of legitimate external concern" (Ewell, 2009, p. 14). The student voice and "meaningful" student involvement require "listening to the voices of those historically silent, [which] is an essential element of equity-minded assessment" (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020, p. 10). Montenegro and Jankowski argued that students must be involved in the assessment process for it to be culturally responsive to diverse student populations:

1. Be mindful of the student population(s) being served and involve students in assessing learning.
2. Use appropriate student-focused and cultural language in learning outcomes statements to ensure students understand what is expected of them.
3. Develop and use assessment tools and multiple sources of evidence that are culturally responsive to current students.
4. [Prioritize] intentional improvement of student learning through disaggregated data-driven change that examines structures, demonstrations of learning, and supports that may privilege some students' learning while marginalizing others. (p. 7)

Similarly, Thomas and McFarlane (2018) suggested that faculty and administrators reframe qualitative assessments to include institutionally inward questions for faculty and staff about the cultures impacting student learning and sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2015, 2019).

Equity-minded assessments for improving the academic advising and learning experiences should challenge institutions to prioritize the student's perspective (Klemenčič,

2018), acknowledge differential experiences, and act to close gaps in the rates of college completion and belonging. Scaling a "student-ready campus" paradigm would allow students to voice their concerns and perspectives for quality assurance actively. Equity-minded assessment efforts should collect data for meaning and policy action: critical policy analysis enables the focus to shift from what and how questions, which are prevalent in current research and widespread discussion on student engagement, to questions concerning the assessments' broader political and economic context and the different ways in which the present and past can be conceived as a policy narrative. Such an approach invites related questions around why student engagement is now dominant (and largely unchallenged), the levels through which it operates, and the ways it differentially impacts the policy actors at the center of this development (Macfarlane & Tomlinson, 2016, p. 18). While including students is likely to raise concerns about privacy, online anonymous submissions using Qualtrics or other software and group reflection methods such as Ripple Effect Mapping (Meyerhoff, 2020) should protect students from privacy violations and the risk of tokenism (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020).

Designing a Strategic and Iterative Process: Language and Frameworks

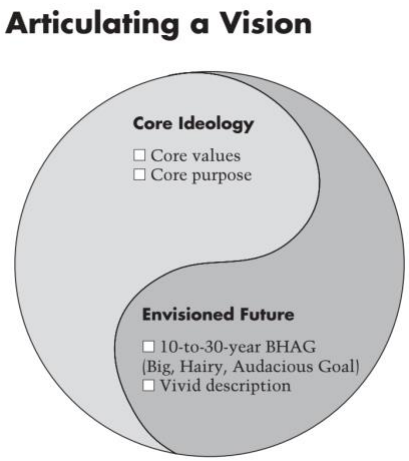
In Costanza-Chock's book *Design Justice* (2020), the author situates the theory and practice of design: its origins in industry to emerging digital technologies, and later its reference to social justice frameworks as defined by researchers in science and technology studies, Black feminist scholars (e.g., bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Audre Lorde) and trans/gender-nonconforming activist-scholars such as the author. The book outlines the push and pull of organizational and community values, the positionality and power of designers, the importance of knowing origin narratives and co-creating justice-oriented workspaces, and the future of social justice in design processes and outcomes. Justice-oriented design theory argues

against the possibility of “universal” design and instead for centering the users' needs, particularly those from marginalized communities.

Action research and design thinking are research methodologies that can enable educators and practitioners to build empathy for their students, test ideas, and iterate solutions. Design–thinking experts argue that institutional leaders must make time and space for these approaches; research supports that design thinking processes lead to solutions aligned with users’ interests and needs. These procedures reduce the risk of costly innovations, promote success in implementing new solutions, and increase chances for organizational adaptability (Liedtka et al., 2021). The multi-step “discovery” and “testing” phases encourage leaders who bring together teams of managers and practitioners (aligners of the process and the designers) to build a sense of empathy with their students. These parties can reflect on their strengths in and discomfort with the ideal mindsets designers inhabit, making “sense” of what is occurring and how to address problems through relational understandings, self-reflection, scientific inquiry, and presencing/prototyping. How to inhabit these mindsets as individuals and as a team is beyond the scope of this chapter; an online assessment from Innovation Impact (n.d.) is available for leaders and teams to assess their mindset preferences. Given the discomfort with organizational change and the need to involve multiple stakeholders, understanding individual and collective mindsets for innovation will help teams work together. There are other effective process frameworks facilitate strategic planning and goal setting (Collins & Porras, 1996; Doerr, 2018; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004).

Figure 12

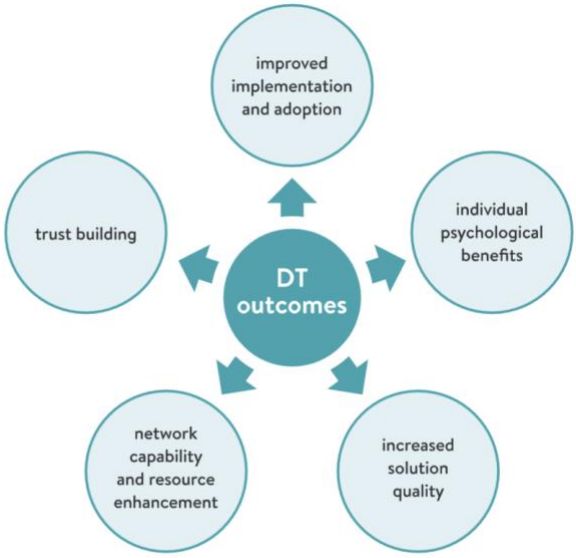
Core Purpose, Values, and Long-Term Goals



Note: As part of the "pre-work" for building a (DEI) strategy or an overarching plan for DEI, it is essential to articulate a vision that incorporates the organization's core values and purpose/mission and an envisioned future—what Collins and Porras describe as a "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal." From "Building Your Company's Vision," by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras, 1996, in *Harvard Business Review, September–October 1996* (https://hbr.org/1996/09/building-your-companys-vision). Copyright 1996 by Harvard Business Review.

Figure 13

Research on Design-Thinking Organizational Outcomes



Note: The authors' research provides evidence for improved quality and outcomes. In *Experiencing Design* (Chapter 2), by Jeanne Liedtka, Karen Hold, and Jessica Eldridge, 2021, Columbia University Press (https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/lied19426.4). Copyright 2021 by Columbia University Press.

Recently, practitioners have criticized long-term strategic plans and favored short-term goals and an iterative process aligned with mission, vision, and values (Liedtka et al., 2021).

"FLI" students at the sample schools proudly displayed their identities in images and through personal stories; overall, 17 institutional websites readily embraced this intersectional group of students. Design thinking has become a process for reconsidering systems and their approach (Liedtka et al., 2021). Design justice principles necessitate the centering and inclusion of the people most impacted by design choices and inviting them to fully participate in the decisions about and creation of what is being designed and how it addresses their needs (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Designers are facilitators of a process, and they readily include the people who are the experts on their situational context (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Upholding these

principles should be viewed as a necessary step in designing for inclusion and belonging.

Positioning Academic Advising for Equity

Lawton (2018) provided a framework and several recommendations to position an academic advising system for equity. The author warned against "piecemeal enhancements" (p. 35) and outlined a strategy for four stages of work:

Preparation for Positioning

Lawton suggested a process for designing effective academic advising systems that begins with understanding "the theory and national research on student development and learning, behavior theory, and structural biases that lead to inequitable educational outcomes" (Lawton, 2018, p. 35) and dedicating time and resources to get to know students on a deeper level. Building empathy for diverse student populations is critical. (See Appendix H for a suggested reading list.)

Culturally Responsive Approaches for Academic Advising as a Teaching Endeavor

Academic advising must be valued by the institution and prioritized by articulating clear objectives key performance indicators (Doerr, 2018) for improving students' learning experiences, learning outcomes, and a sense of belonging. Some schools have developed of an advising curriculum with clearly stated learning outcomes for students and advisors and ongoing professional development for advisors (NACADA, 2024b).

Shared Responsibility for Student Progress and Success

Transformational academic advising systems need collaboration across units and the structural hierarchy. The work would center students in the design of academic advising for equity, and it should signal to students their value beyond their academic achievements and

GPA. Faculty and primary-role advisors should be empowered to lead in enacting change. NACADA's Excellence in Academic Advising initiative (2024b) is an example of this approach.

Monitoring Progress for Students Who Struggle

Case management is a framework that institutions adopt for working with students needing coordinated and proactive support. Institutions should leverage technology to monitor student progress and connect them to services. Lawton (2018) also recommended that institutions track individual students from underrepresented groups upon enrollment and introduce all students to academic success strategies and career development as part of a universal design approach.

Systemic Storytelling

When concluding, Lawton (2018) summarized a series of strategic steps for transforming an academic advising system for equity: *Conduct interviews and focus groups* for mapping the current student experience with the existing institutional educational advising model; *organize cross-functional and cross-hierarchical discussions and collaborations* when making decisions about what to do next; and provide *"continuous improvement mechanisms"* and *"[keep] students at the center of the design process"* (Lawton, 2018, pp. 41–42, emphasis added). I propose that college educators design an advising curriculum with learning outcomes for students and advisors, and foster a shared sense of responsibility amongst faculty and primary advisors to transform the ecosystem.

Storytelling has been used as a pedagogy for discussing controversial topics and personal experiences (Bell, 2010; Ford, 2018). A systemic storytelling strategy could foster greater student engagement and reflection while offering divisional leaders and advisors a

chance to develop empathy for students experiencing difficulties and marginalization. For example, an institution could build or reconfigure a platform in an institutionally supported learning management system or electronic portfolio platform (Eynon & Gambino, 2017) accessible to all new students. The platform could include prompts for ongoing student reflection during or after each semester/year, tailoring the reflection curriculum for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Advisors would have the opportunity to read the students' thoughts about their learning outcomes, and students would be able to submit anonymous feedback about their advising experiences.

I suggest an ongoing, multiyear storytelling and reflection project to foster student reflection, integrated learning, and connection to advisors and mentors. 2018The project would also allow students to learn key concepts related to navigating their academic experiences throughout college. In addition, this project would identify students experiencing difficulties via proactive interventions. This process would eventually lead to adaptive changes in the ecosystem.

- **For students, periodic and systemic reflection via the online platform** (structured moments of guided reflection) would enable them to consider their experiences and meaning and set goals. For example, an online course, e-portfolio, or other method could prompt students toward the end of a semester to return to the core concepts or their personal goals by reflecting on them.
- **For students and advisors, systemic storytelling about their reflections** (via the online platform) would augment the advising systems, structures, and programs already in place. Advisors would learn about how students navigate college and their learning pathways when they share their experiences.

- **For advisors, systemic listening periods (focus groups, interviews)** would assist advisors/faculty/administrators with listening carefully to students who experience college success, academic setbacks, and institutional instances of alienation.

This systemic storytelling blueprint is intended for diverse and minoritized student populations: historically underrepresented students by race and ethnicity, first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, DACA/undocumented students, students in need of accessibility accommodations, trans/gender non-conforming students, and all students having intersectional and marginalized identities. However, the entire undergraduate population should participate in and potentially benefit from an advising curriculum that elicits self-reflection on their learning process and outcomes. Advisors would learn more about minoritized student groups through survey responses, students' submitted reflections, and focus groups. Various student populations lack the social/cultural capital (the "hidden curriculum") to navigate the college environment. Many experience mental health challenges and feelings of isolation (imposter syndrome, stereotype threat, systemic barriers given their contexts outside of college). Additionally, advisors in the current advising environment lack the time to deeply listen and consider the experiences of students who need our empathy. This approach would provide planned, systemic, ongoing reflections and dialogue about clearly stated learning goals/outcomes for students and advisors (Meyerhoff, 2020).

Implementation

This suggested plan focuses on the first stage of the design process or on *recognizing the problem and the issues contributing to it*. The project serves as a method for the second stage, *setting an agenda* for the institution. It also suggests the other aspects of enacting policy—formulation, adoption, implementation, and analysis/evaluation—to emphasize problems and to

imagine a possible systemic solution that effectively addresses the assessed need.

1. Establish Common Language and References. We need to establish and clearly communicate a shared sense of purpose for what students learn and how institutions should support them to establish multi-stakeholder buy-in and to garner support and resources. We need to develop common ground among faculty and primary advisors (e.g. "What is equity?" "How am I practicing academic advising for equity now?"). Advisors could discuss the research literature on student development, behavior, and experiences with structural barriers and marginalization in higher education.

2. Build, repurpose, or add on to an existing online platform for the multi-year student advising curriculum, learning processes, and reflecting on "success." I envision developing a curriculum with distinct learning goals for each subsequent year, building in online reflections that we prompt at the start of each semester and the end of two consecutive semesters. Students would be encouraged to share their thoughts on the learning goals in the modules after completing them and finishing the two semesters each year—so at three points each academic year. Students could opt to share their reflections with their assigned advisor, or someone not assigned to them (someone in the ecosystem).

3. Establish structured listening periods for faculty/advisors to build empathy and improve advising practices. Advisors and advising professionals could conduct focus groups with selected groups of students right before each enrollment period or at least once per year. Advisors could also gather once a year to reflect on advising practices and participate in professional development. Advising deans could review the feedback on reporting ecosystem/methods during the summer.

Instead of launching an online platform for the entire undergraduate body, institutions

could start by prototyping or testing the project with students enrolled in cohort-based programs or gateway courses (e.g., first-year seminars, pre-orientation programs, STEM courses).

Impediments to Change

I am aware of the need for cross-sectional institutional buy-in for a systemic transformation of the advising ecosystem, and the fatigue associated with new initiatives (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2020); piecemeal changes are more accessible. However, leaders and practitioners could begin the adaptive change process by conducting needs assessments, reviewing existing institutional data, and discussing these data points together. We should aspire to collectively, instead of individually or in unit silos, imagine innovative approaches. In re-imagining the work and implementing new strategies and ways of collaborating, college leaders and project managers should ask, "What incentives can we offer to make time for this work for advisors and the project managers?" and "What does success look like—better data for student belonging, and equal participation in high impact practices? Disaggregated data and fewer students at risk for academic separation?" Choosing short-term priorities and long-term objectives can help colleagues feel the progress milestones for "big, hairy, audacious [equity] goals" (Collins & Porras, 1996).

Leading for Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

The origin stories of elite, highly selective institutions in the U.S. include legacies of exclusion (Karabel, 2006) and ties to slavery (Brown University, 2006; Wilder, 2013). The DEI agendas of HEIs historically designed for White, male, young, able-bodied, and privileged students must recognize that access is not the same as belonging (Jack, 2019); (re)designing living and learning environments should include the voices and expertise of minoritized students by implementing authentic, participatory processes (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Executive leaders

are positioned to set the tone and agenda and to organize the people leading transformational change that benefits diverse student populations. Cultural intelligence is an essential skill in leading people within an organization and collaborating with other stakeholders outside of it. Culturally intelligent leaders analyze the situation and find common ground with stakeholders. They observe people's actions, demeanor, and behaviors, and they act from a place of confidence or belief in their abilities to become knowledgeable of others, learn their ways, and gain their trust (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).

When whole institutions, divisions, or units embark on a DEI strategy and plan, leaders must champion the journey and model associated actions. Developing a leader's cultural intelligence ought to be part of the strategy. Leaders should embrace a mindset of confidence and humility by displaying what they know and what they need to learn more about. Leaders should develop concrete methods for implementing feedback loops and two-way communication with multiple stakeholders, including academic advisors. Campus climate surveys are meaningful only if leaders listen closely and take the feedback seriously. Leaders should openly share the results of the pulse checks or climate surveys and convey their intentions to act on the prevalent suggestions. Qualitative feedback provides nuanced insights into how learning and belonging occur. HEI educators and leaders should build their capacities for empathy for diverse student populations without tokenizing them.

Desired DEI outcomes should be prioritized and tied to clear objectives and key results (Doerr, 2018) and specific metrics (Crabb, 2020). Leaders should understand the difference between strategy and tactics (Horwath, 2019). Crabb (2020) and Lawton (2018) both cautioned against starting with tactical actions before understanding the overall strategic design for desired outcomes. Also, leaders will foster a culture of accountability by "walking the talk" or

demonstrating the day-to-day work of equity and inclusion. Leaders need to embed organizational accountability by providing the human and financial resources to implement intrinsic responsibility and extrinsic accountability measures and to improve performance. The required resources, ongoing reflection, forums, professional development opportunities, feedback sessions, and action planning will help sustain the accountability of leadership and employees for their inclusion and organizational transformation (Crabb, 2020). The complexity of progress on DEI goals will not be accomplished in the short term, and the goals are likely to keep changing (Hemerling, 2016). Leaders must model a capacity for reflection on their personal accountability and growth curve; doing so will encourage the campus community members to do the same.

Conclusion

This executive dissertation considered the purposes of academic advising and how it is used to mitigate existing equity gaps in higher education. My study investigated how highly selective, four-year, private liberal arts institutions presented the purposes and goals and delineated the structure and resources for academic advising on their websites by using a content analysis of 10 college and 10 university websites. My research also examined if the sites included enhanced services for diverse and minoritized student populations. The sample described academic advising for supporting intellectual and personal development yet most concretely presented advising approaches for helping with pre-major topics (i.e., course selection, the transition to college), declaring a major, and degree completion. Moreover, advising descriptions for first-generation college and low-income student populations presented a coordinated and holistic support model. The continuity of advising was a dominant paradigm; advising websites described the availability of many advising resources and communicated the importance of self-advocacy and developing self-reliance over time. There was no significant difference between

the advising sites for the sample colleges and universities; however, if relationships are central to advising and learning, the context for developing relationships differed (e.g., impromptu dining hall conversations at a small college vs. advising events taking place in an undergraduate university dormitory). Finally, I discerned four website typologies or dialogic approaches for presenting academic advising services and suggested the potential for creating interactive approaches to engage diverse and minoritized students using technology. These findings have substantial implications for academic advising in the context of elite college cultures and how institutions describe and actively communicate support for diverse student populations. Additionally, this research contributes to the national conversation about academic advising as a systemic enterprise and how its pedagogy and practice potentially supports diverse student populations with building advising/mentoring relationships, experiencing integrated learning and achieving college success.

The scholarship on academic advising and student development theory has evolved from providing frameworks such as "developmental academic advising" and "advising as teaching" to directly discussing systemic oppression in higher education culture and how minoritized student groups experience postsecondary education. While faculty-advisor scholars encourage academic advisors to develop relationships with advisees to facilitate students' discernment about the meaning of their education, many advisors do not think of their primary role as one for fostering student development. Moreover, more research is needed to understand how PWIs can more readily or successfully support developmental academic advising practices for minoritized student populations.

Significant changes to the academic advising ecosystem would require a considerable effort put towards the "sensemaking" or problem-setting stage (Lietka et al., 2021) and

articulating a clear rationale for positioning advising to address equity gaps in the academic experience (Lawton, 2018). Colleges/universities must take steps to conduct need assessments, gather an inventory of current advising efforts, and marshal current and new resources for using academic advising to empower students to thrive in college. Anti-racist pedagogy calls on educators to listen to voices from the ground up, put metrics to the changes we want to commit to making, and acknowledge our blind spots (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2021).

Highly selective and well-resourced postsecondary institutions must continue to do more to support diverse and minoritized student populations for their sense of belonging, flourishing, and college success. Systemic storytelling efforts can foster empathy for student populations and facilitate adaptive (and necessary) changes to our advising system and practices. The next generation of technologies present the potential to aid in facilitating student connections to advising services and mentoring opportunities, and assist advisors with providing the humanized, holistic, and proactive support that minoritized students have been known to want and what institutions of higher education promise to offer. Artificial intelligence holds the potential to scale up individualized access to resources and proactive advising interventions; however, liberal learning at its core is requires relational advising and mentoring to support a student's journey towards enlightenment and personal transformation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACADEMIC ADVISING WEBSITES AS INDICATORS OF SUPPORT FOR DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATIONS AT HIGHLY SELECTIVE INSTITUTIONS

Peggy Chang '24 EdD | April 2024

PROBLEM OF THE PRACTICE	**Academic advising** can teach students how to engage with postsecondary curricula and connect curricular engagement to career development and lifelong learning. However, **its tactical use is often misaligned with specific equity-focused goals, undervalued by institutional leaders, and under-resourced for maximum impact.** Moreover, the scholarship on minoritized students' perceptions of academic advising indicates that advising methods and systems require a holistic and multifaceted approach to address diverse and minoritized students' expectations.
PURPOSE OF STUDY	This study analyzed institutional websites and **created a thematic inventory of their content, which contains the purpose, strategies, and desired outcomes of undergraduate academic advising at 20 highly selective, four-year liberal arts institutions.** The research considered how websites indicate academic advising practices' structure and resource commitments. Additionally, this study explored website content about specific methods and resources for how academic advising supports **institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals.**
FINDINGS	1) The HEI academic advising sites promised the **continuity of advising**. 2)The descriptions of how advising works included assurances of **advising relationships.** 3) Students were expected to be **self-advocates** and become **self-reliant.** 4) Holistic support was explicitly described for **first-generation college and low-income students.** 5) Academic advising was linked to **liberal learning goals and student transformation.** However, the most cited approaches for advising were for pre-major/exploratory advising, choosing a major, and degree completion. **Other aspects were tactically generalized.**
TOOL FOR CHANGE	• Language matters. Develop a **shared understanding of and a sense of purpose for academic advising**; share the purpose statement with multiple stakeholders and on advising websites. • Develop a shared understanding of **equity, equity gaps, and how academic advising practices can help mitigate them.** • Prioritize **qualitative assessments** of how students experience the learning process and how they want to be supported in achieving their goals. • **Utilize technology to enhance advising relationships** and encourage student reflection. **Gather input from students who would most benefit.** • **Value academic advising** by encouraging professional development and incentivizing quality advising approaches from individual and team advisors.

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APPENDIX A

Primary Data Spreadsheet for 20 Sample Academic Advising Websites

Table 8

Variables for Data Collection

VARIABLES	URLs / Key Words / Website Structure (institutional & website)	Quotes for coding	Images/other media	Hyperlinks & subpages	Navigation Menus	Student Voices
FOCAL POINT FOR DATA SEARCH						
Main Academic Advising (AA) website/homepage (directed to a student audience)						
Parent website						
Key Word Search in main HEI Homepage for "Academic Advising," Top 5 Hits -- highlight which site is the "main AA site"						
CONTEXT FOR LEARNING & ACADEMIC ADVISING						
Graduation Requirements						
Distribution Requirements						
Explicit mention of Liberal Learning on HEI homepage, Main AA page, its Parent page?						
Defining characteristics of curriculum/learning environment as stated on Main AA website or Parent website						
PHILOSOPHY - STRUCTURE - INFRASTRUCTURE FOR AA (5WS & HOW)						
AA Centralized / Decentralized (oversight/accountability)						
Explicitly stated Purpose and/or Desired Impact of AA (WHAT & WHY)						
Explicitly stated or discerned Strategies/Pedagogy/Method/Teachers (WHAT & HOW)						
Primary AA actors (WHO)						
Tactics/Infrastructure/Moments when AA occurs (HOW, WHO, WHERE & WHEN: programs, online tools, pre-orientation, etc.)						
AA & EQUITY OUTCOMES						
Explicit mention of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging & AA on main AA website?						
Equity Focus/Population (A)						
Explicitly stated or discerned Strategies/methods/groups involved (WHAT & HOW)						
Tactics/Infrastructure/Moments when AA occurs (HOW, WHO, WHERE & WHEN: programs, online tools, pre-orientation, etc.)						
Equity Focus/Population (B)						
Explicitly stated or discerned Strategies/methods/groups involved (WHAT & HOW)						
Tactics/Infrastructure/Moments when AA occurs (HOW, WHO, WHERE & WHEN: programs, online tools, pre-orientation, etc.)						
AA PROMISE & ACCOUNTABILITY						
Admissions Office & AA						
Annual Report, DEI plan, or survey data on AA?						
HEI DEI/Equity Statement?						
Other data/notes						
[HEI homepage]						
[viewed on DATES]						
[# of times viewed out-of-date information or broken link:]						
[# of websites viewed:]						
Text-Heavy						

Note: I used a separate spreadsheet for each school. I created drop-down menus to standardize data units.

APPENDIX B

Institutional Demographics and Characteristics Spreadsheet

Table 9

Variables for Institutional Characteristics (Context for the Study)

	Institutions (10 Colleges + 10 Universities)									
Variables	U1	C1	U2	C2	U3	C3	U4	C4	U5	C5 +
HEI Identity										
HEI & homepage										
Label/Sample Code										
Institution Type										
Founded										
Mission Statement										
Location										
Region										
Enrollment & Selectivity										
Undergrad. Enrollment										
Acceptance Rate										
Gender-Aware or Co-Ed										
Cost/Price										
Tuition										
Room										
Board										
Fees										
Estimated Cost of Attendance										
Academic Structure										
Curriculum Type										
# of majors										
# of minors										
Other (certificates, etc.)										
Graduate degrees? Y/N										
student:faculty ratio										
Diversity Demographics										
% FGCS										
% POC										
%HUG										
% Int'l										
%gender										
% receiving aid and/or loans										
% Pell-Grant eligible										
Institutional Demographics & Student Outcomes										
6-year graduation rate (average)										
Faculty Race & Gender Composition										
OIR Factbook										
Financial Resources										
IPEDS: $ Percent distribution of core expenses, by function: Fiscal year 2021" -- "Academic Support" / "Student Services"										
"Core expenses per FTE enrollment, by function: Fiscal year 2021" -- "Academic Support" / "Student Services"										
"Percent distribution of core revenues, by source: Fiscal year 2021" -- "Tuition & Fees" / "Investment Return"										
Core revenues per FTE enrollment, by source: Fiscal year 2021" -- "Tuition & Fees" / "Investment Return"										
Endowment										

Note: Some information was collected from the institutional websites and other data from IPEDS.

APPENDIX C

Executive Summary of Initial Findings for Consultive Group (Fall 2023)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (INITIAL FINDINGS, FALL 2023)

Academic Advising Websites as Indicators of Support for Diverse Student Populations

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1 WHY ACADEMIC ADVISING WEBSITES?

The research makes visible the various actors—faculty, advising deans and other professional staff, peer advisors, third-party organizations, and technologies—involved in the processes for ensuring access to students' ability to thrive in college. Additionally, this study explores website content about **specific methods and resources for how academic advising supports institutional equity goals.**

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do highly selective, four-year liberal arts institutions in the United States present **the purposes and goals of academic advising on their websites?** How do the websites delineate **the structure and resources for academic advising?**

According to their websites, do highly selective higher education institutions acknowledge **academic services and support for diverse and minoritized student populations?** If so, what enhanced academic services and support do these HEIs offer?

3 RESEARCH PROCESS

- 10 College + 10 University Websites
- (Latent) Content Analysis & Coding
- Analyze mission/purpose statements for meaning
- Outline specific advising strategies and tactical approaches
- Note attention to specific student populations

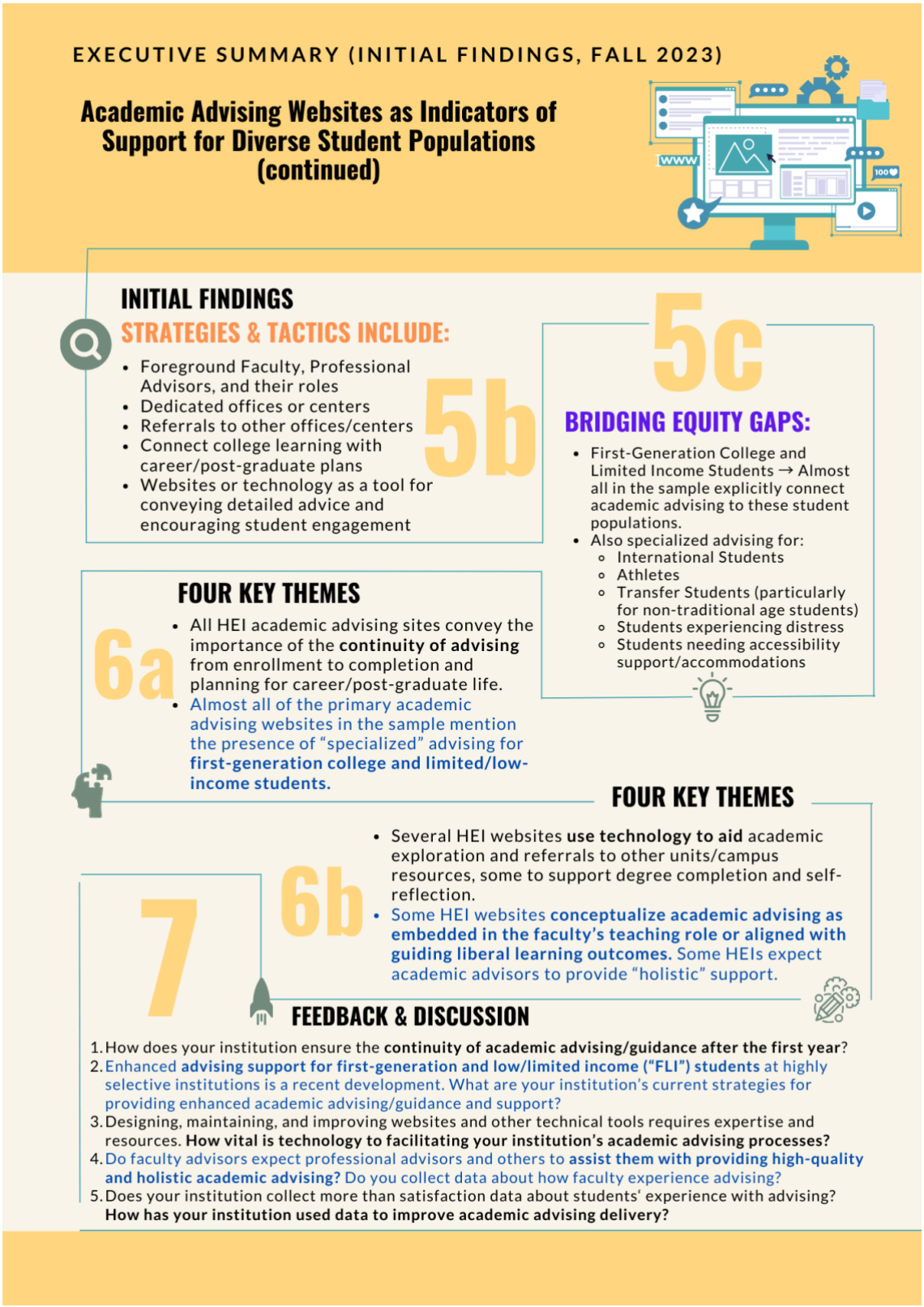
4 THREE WEBSITE TYPES

A. "The Basics": Provides information about programs and resources similar to a hard-copy document; describes what academic advising is; provides a directory of people and offices.
B. "The Roadmap": Describes academic advising's purpose; outlines in detail advising continuity and learning milestones; describes specific people involved and when they meet with students.
C. "The Guide": Elements of "The Roadmap" plus stories from students, faculty, and staff about how advising works and how learning occurs; advising descriptions convey holistic support; the sites provide tech tools for self-monitoring; "specialized" advising is asset-based yet includes guidance about working through challenges.

5a INITIAL FINDINGS

MISSION/PURPOSE STATEMENTS CONVEY:

- Topics for which undergraduates (may) need advising
- Moments when academic advising occurs
- What academic advisors (or the advising system) can do
- Who is responsible for giving or receiving advising
  - "Student's Responsibility"
  - "Partnership" with Faculty and Professional Advisors
  - "Network" of Resources
  - "Community" of Advising and Support
  - Peer Advisors



Note: The Executive Summary of the study's initial findings was sent to eight colleagues representing six COFHE institutions before the consultive conversation took place.

APPENDIX D

Copy of Email Request for Consultive Conversation

Dear colleagues,

I am an academic advising dean and lead a peer-to-peer advising center at Brown. [redacted] has graciously offered to forward this email about conversations I hope to have this fall to support my research process as an Ed.D. candidate at the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College.

I am writing a dissertation entitled "Academic Advising Websites as Indicators of Support for Diverse Student Populations at Highly Selective Liberal Arts Institutions." I hope to meet with senior academic affairs administrators at Ivy+ institutions and selective liberal arts colleges—individually or in a small group session—for feedback about my initial findings (see attached two-page flyer and write-up document).

I'm interested in this discussion to understand the context of my initial results from institutional leaders like you. I will **not** record the meetings/group sessions or include the conversations in my dissertation; instead, I wish to triangulate the validity and reliability of my data's initial findings and consider your perspective as I complete my analysis and prepare conclusions and recommendations in my last chapter.

Please provide your availability for an individual or group virtual meeting (before or after Thanksgiving and before the winter break) in the Google Form [link]. I would appreciate it if you forwarded this email to one of your colleagues if you are not available.

Thank you so much for your time and for considering my request.

Sincerely,
—Peggy Chang '24
Candidate, Executive Ed.D. in Higher Education
Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Encl.: two-page executive summary and written executive summary with references

APPENDIX E

Institutional Characteristics of Sample

Table 10

Institution Founding, Location, Composition Type

Year Founded	*Before and until 1783:* **3** *1784–1865:* **10** *1866 and afterward:* **7**
Location/Region	*Mid-Atlantic:* **5** *Mid-West:* **4** *Northeast:* **7** *South or West Coast:* **4**
Composition Type	*Co-Educational:* **18** *Gender Aware:* **2**

Table 11

Academic Structure and Compositional Diversity of Faculty and Leadership

Curriculum Type	*Core or Distribution Requirements:* **17** *Open Curriculum:* **3**
Average Number of Majors & Minors	*Colleges:* **44 majors; 46 minors** *Universities:* **59 majors; 32 minors**
Average Advertised Student:Faculty Ratio	*Colleges:* **9:1** *Universities:* **6:1**
Compositional Diversity	*Tenured, full-time instructional faculty (institutionally reported):* ● Historically Underrepresented Groups

	(HUG): **16%** ● Women: **43%** *Presidents:* ● Black/Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC): **45%** ● Women: **65%**

Note: The data in Table 10 were taken from figures provided by the sample's websites. The HEI presidents' race and gender were discerned by reading their bio on the HEI websites.

Table 12

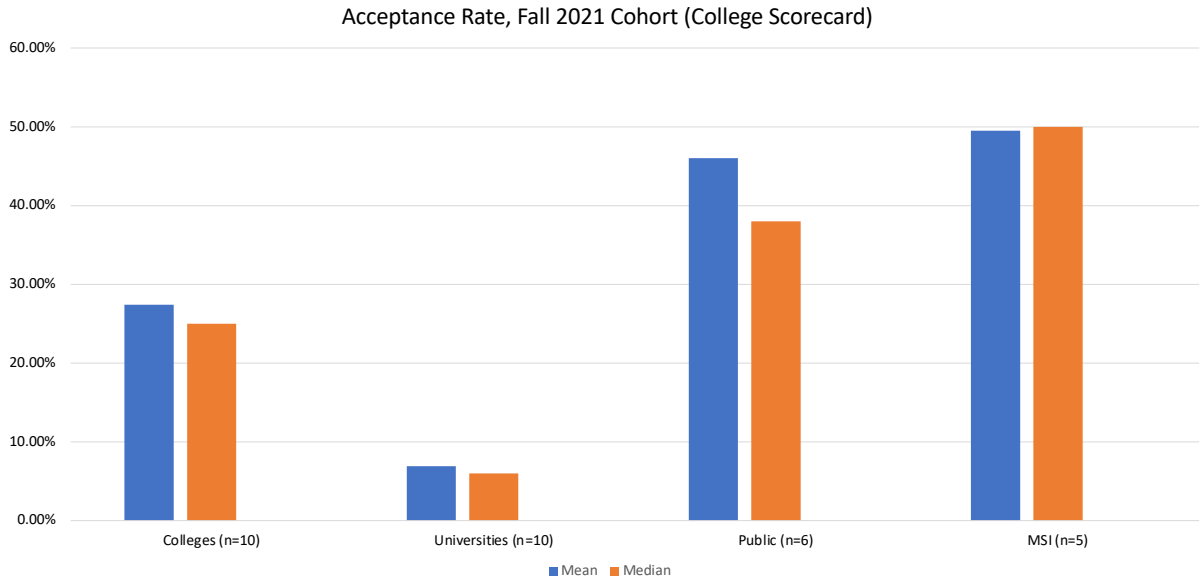
Undergraduate Enrollment (Fall 2023)

College Enrollment	*Less than 2,000:* **4** *2,001–3,000:* **6**
University Undergraduate Enrollment	*Less than 6,000:* **3** *Over 6,000:* **7**

Note: Data for the sample's current undergraduate enrollment (Fall 2023) were taken from the institutional websites.

Figure 14

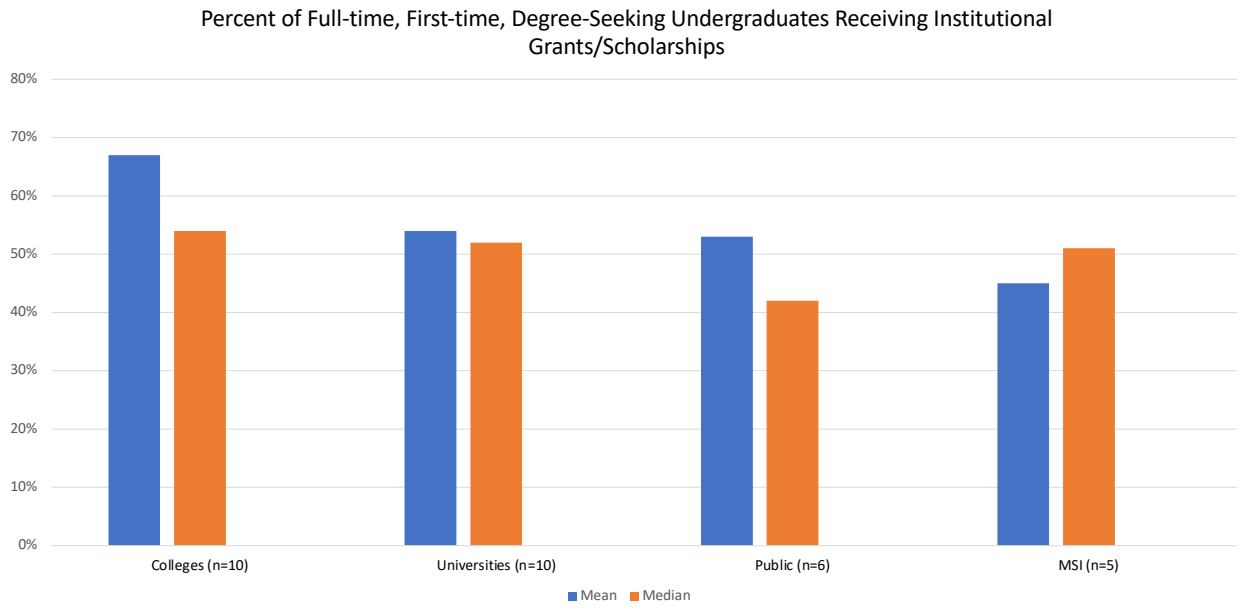
Mean/Median Rates of Acceptance for Sample and Public/MSI Comparison Schools



Note: The acceptance rate data were taken from the *College Scorecard* profile for each school (entering Fall 2021 cohort). For the entering Fall 2021 cohort, the average acceptance rates for the sample colleges were between 7% and 52% and for the sample universities were between 4% and 13%. For the same cohort for the comparison public universities *(n=6),* the averages were between 11% and 92%, and for the sample MSIs *(n=5)* were between 29% and 100%. For comparison, using Barron's Competitive Index and IPEDS data for the *Fall 2019* cohort, the most *competitive* institutions represented only 3% of the overall institutions in the United States. The baccalaureate, full-time enrollment in the most *highly selective* institutions—or 6% of all colleges/universities— was 11% of the overall full-time college enrollment in 2018–2019 (Cahalan et al., 2022, p. 149).

Figure 15

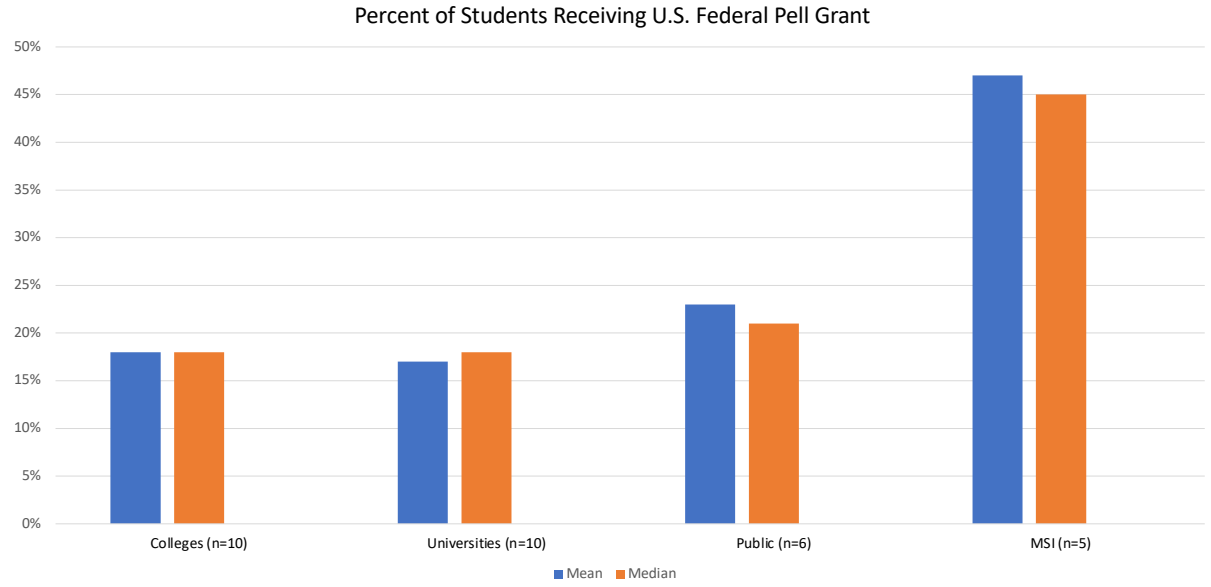
Percent of Full-Time, First-Time, Degree-Seeking Undergraduates Receiving Institutional Grants and Scholarships (IPEDS, 2020–21)



Note: Given the data reported to the federal government by institutions for the year 2021–22 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the statistics for the 2021–22 year may not reflect the typical percentages from year to year. The mean and median percentage of students receiving institutional financial aid were highest for the colleges in the sample.

Figure 16

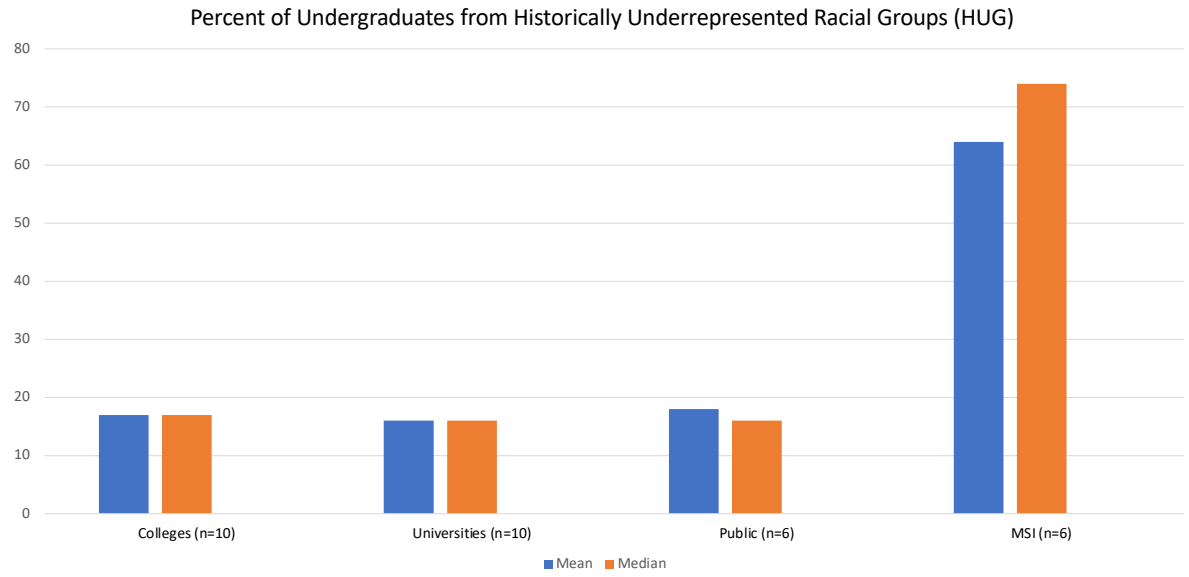
Percent of Undergraduate Students Receiving Pell Grant (IPEDS, 2020–21)



Note: The U.S. Federal Pell Grant is intended for low-income students and thus an indicator of the enrollment of this socioeconomic group. The sample schools enrolled less than 20% of students receiving the Pell Grant, while the students receiving the Pell Grant attended the MSI comparison schools at close to 50% of the MSI undergraduate populations.

Figure 17

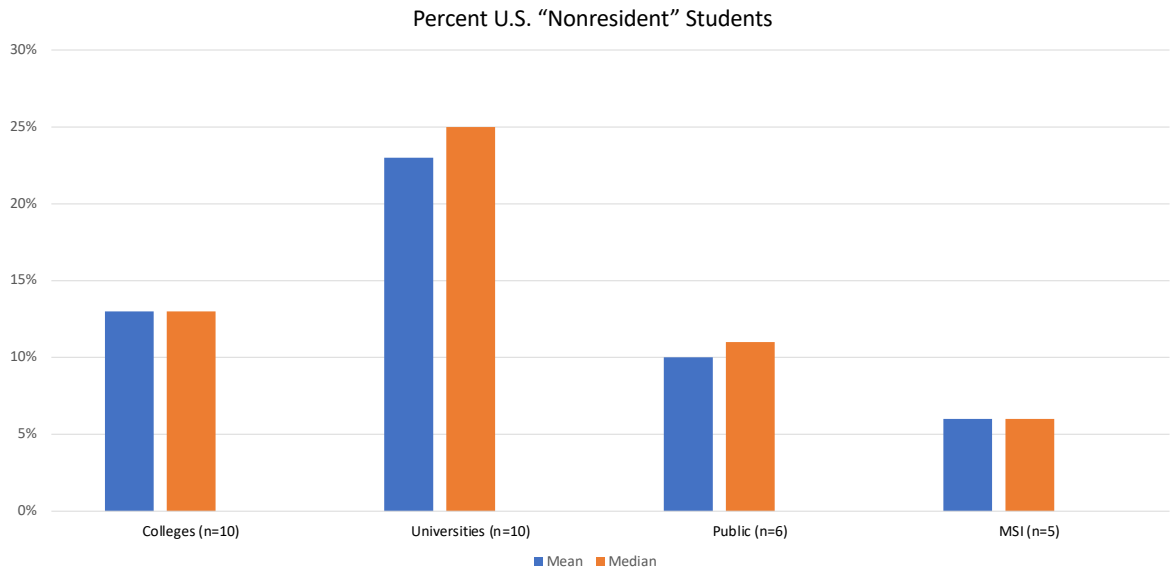
Percent of U.S. Historically Underrepresented Group (HUG) Students (IPEDS, Fall 2021)



Note: The data do not include students reporting two or more races, since the data reported for HUG racial groups were not disaggregated for two or more races. HUG students represented less than one-fifth of the sample colleges, universities, and comparison public universities populations: the median was 17%, 17%, and 16% respectively; HUG students represented 74% of students at the MSI comparison schools.

Figure 18

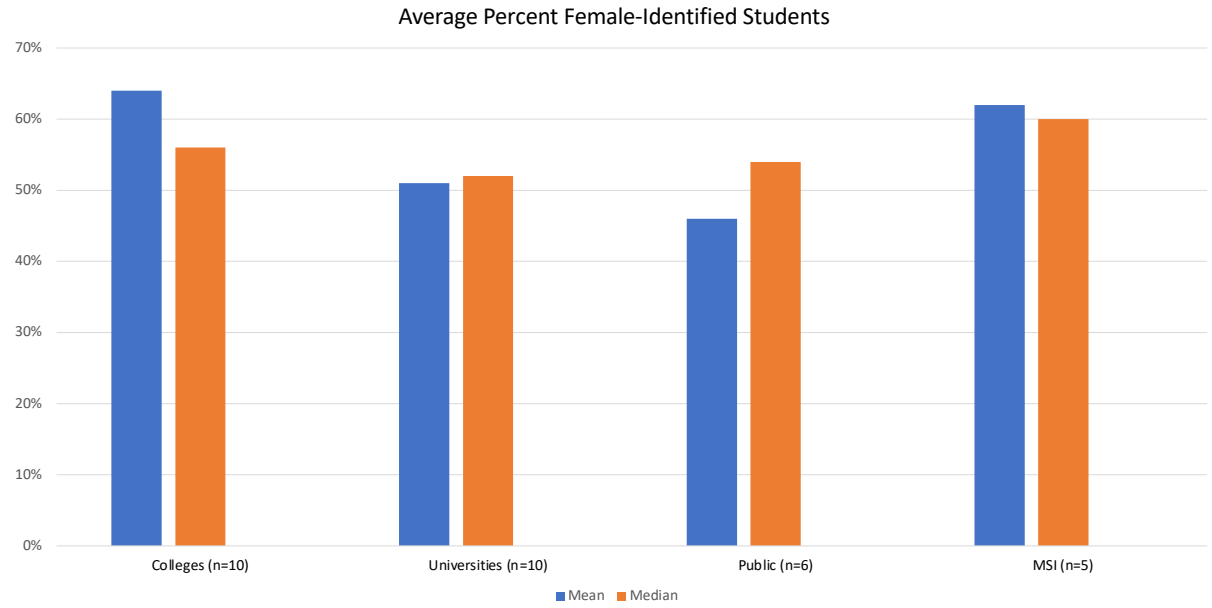
Percent of "U.S. Nonresident" Undergraduate Students (IPEDS, Fall 2021)



Note: The median percent of "U.S. Nonresident" students was the highest at the sample universities at 25%, compared to 13% at the sample colleges, 11% at the comparison public universities, and 6% at the comparison MSIs.

Figure 19

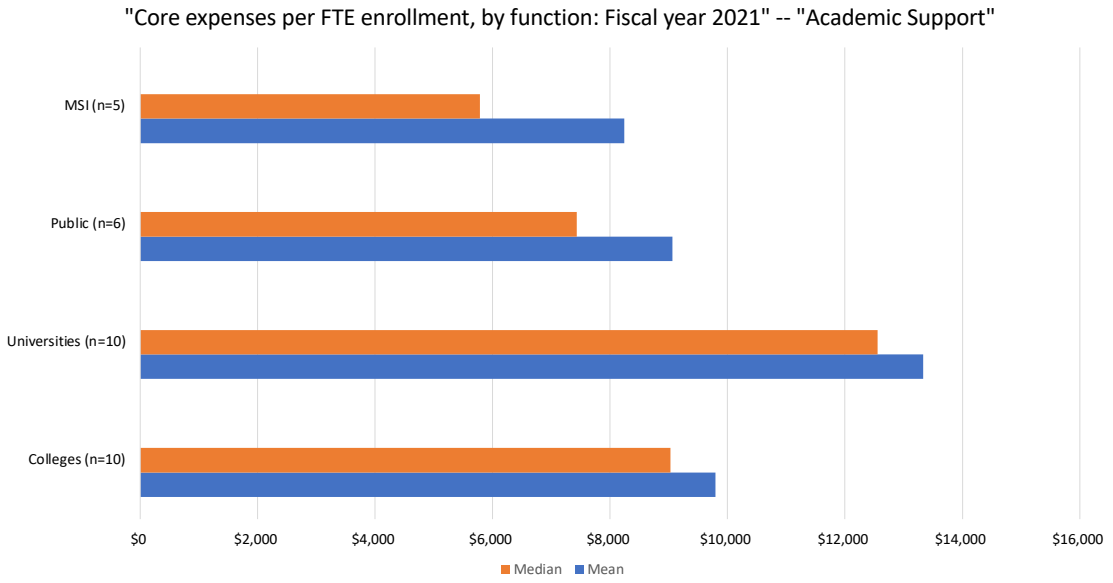
Percent of Female-Identified Undergraduate Students (IPEDS, Fall 2021)



Note: The median percent of female-identified students was highest at the MSI comparison schools at 60%, as compared to the sample colleges (56%), sample universities (52%), and comparison public universities (54%).

Figure 20

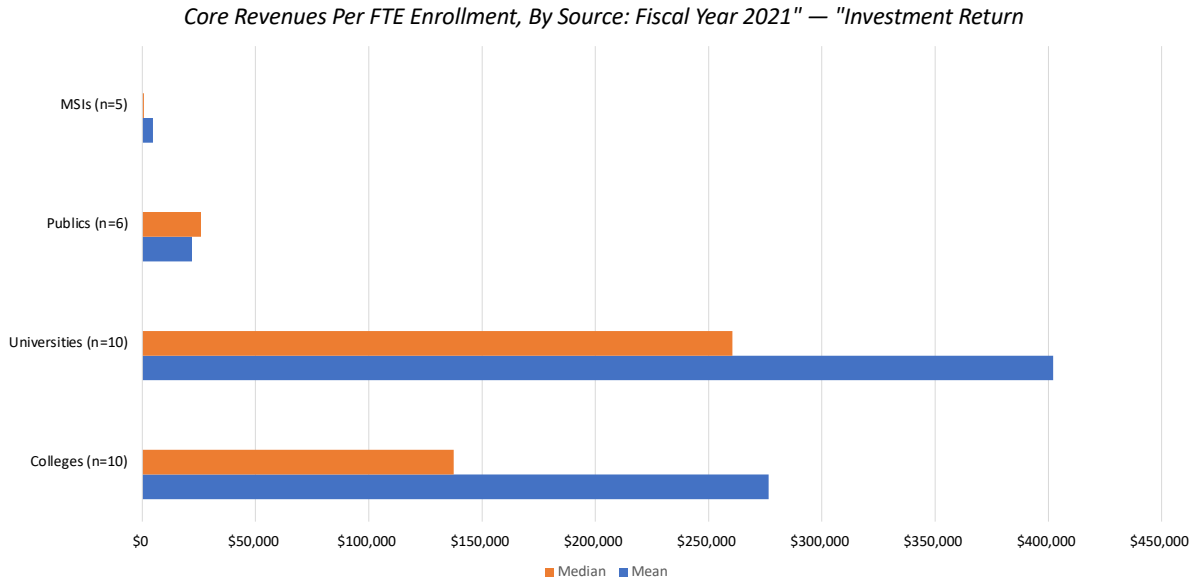
"Core Expenses Per FTE Enrollment, By Function: Fiscal Year 2021" — "Academic Support"



Note: "Academic Support" is defined as "A functional expense category that includes expenses of activities and services that support the institution's primary missions of instruction, research, and public service. It includes the retention, preservation, and display of educational materials (for example, libraries, museums, and galleries); organized activities that provide support services to the academic functions of the institution (such as a demonstration school associated with a college of education or veterinary and dental clinics if their primary purpose is to support the instructional program); media such as audiovisual services; academic administration including academic deans but not department chairpersons); and formally organized and separately budgeted academic personnel development and course and curriculum development expenses. Also included are information technology expenses related to academic support activities; if an institution does not separately budget and expense information technology resources, the costs associated with the three primary programs will be applied to this function and the remainder to institutional support. Institutions include actual or allocated costs for operation and maintenance of plant, interest, and depreciation," in *IPEDS Finance FASB Functional Expense Category* (Common Education Data Standards, n.d., https://ceds.ed.gov/element/001659/#Academicsupport). While the average/median percent distribution of core expenses for academic support was lowest for the sample universities (9%/7.5%), spending per full-time enrolled student was highest for the universities.

Figure 21

"Core Revenues Per FTE Enrollment, By Source: Fiscal Year 2021" — "Investment Return"



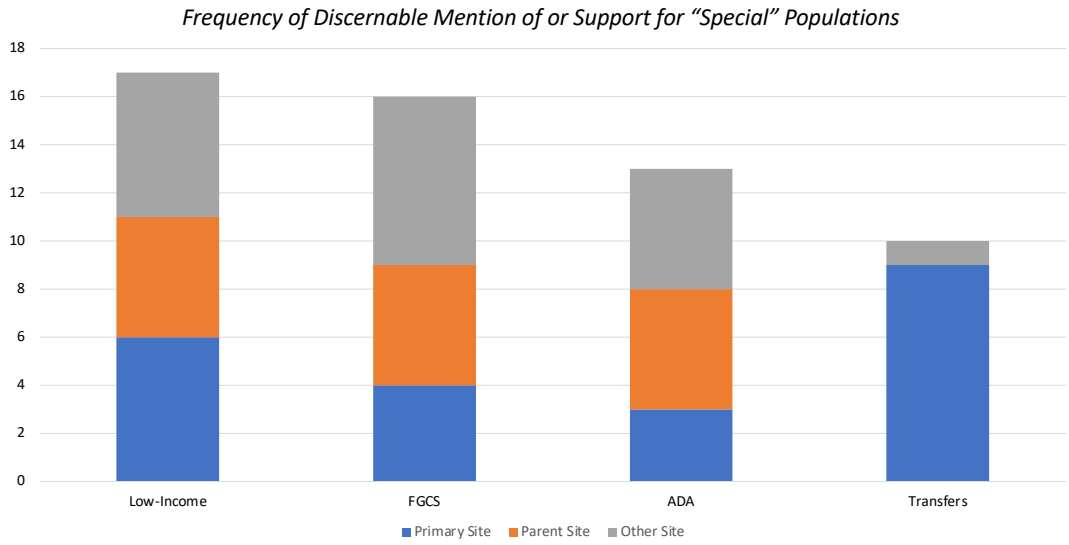
Note: The median endowment investment return per FTE enrolled student was $135K for the sample colleges, $261K for the sample universities, $26K for the comparison public universities, and $672 for the comparison MSIs.

APPENDIX F

Frequency of Mentioned "Special" Populations

Figure 22

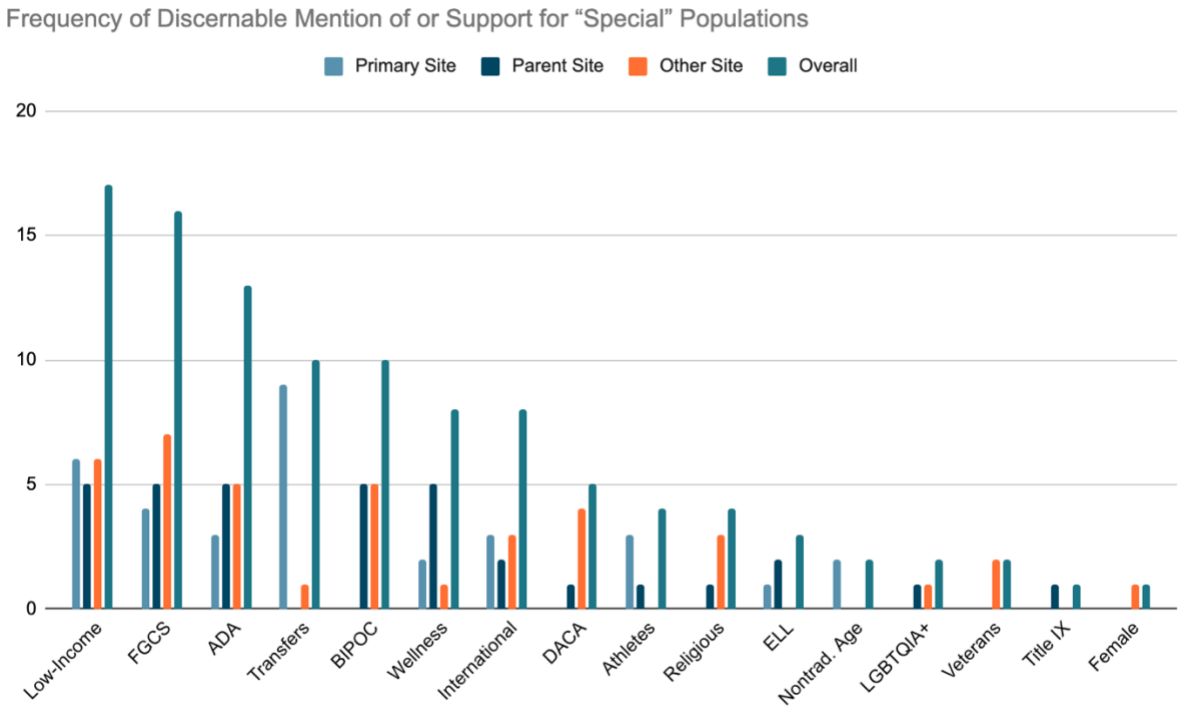
Frequency of Four Most Mentioned "Special" Populations



Note: The first four most mentioned "special" populations found on the HEIs' primary academic advising site, its parent site, or on the HEI's "For Students" or "New Students" pages were low-income students, FGCS, students seeking ADA accommodations, and transfer students. Low-income and FGCS were mentioned most often overall, while transfer students were mentioned most often on the primary academic advising sites. For a full list of the cohorts/populations mentioned on the 20 HEI primary academic advising sites, parent sites, "For Students" or "New Students" web pages, see Table 4 in Chapter 2 or Appendix F, Figure 23.

Figure 23

Frequency of "Special" Populations Mentioned Overall



Note: The "special" populations mentioned on the primary academic advising site, its parent site, or a "For Students" or "New Students" webpage were low-income students, FGCS, students needing ADA accommodations, transfer students, BIPOC students, students seeking wellness resources, international students, DACA students, athletes, students from religious or spiritual communities, nontraditional-age students, LGBTQIA+ students, veterans, students seeking Title IX support, and female-identified students. Table 4 in Chapter 2 lists the schools' placement and frequency of the special populations mentioned.

APPENDIX G

Guiding Questions for Institutional Leaders and Advisors

Developing a Shared Understanding of and Sense of Purpose for Advising

- What is our shared sense of the ideal purpose of academic advising? Do we explain its purpose to students and advisors in places like our website?
- How does our institution ensure the continuity of academic advising/guidance after the first year? What is our approach to sophomore advising, advising for connections, applying learning in other contexts, and learning synthesis through students' college experience (enrollment to completion)?
- What questions do or should we pose to students to provide guidance and an intentional process for reflecting on their evolving goals and during critical moments such as deciding on their major?
- How do we teach students about the value of high-impact learning/practices? How do diverse student populations participate in them, and are we providing equitable access?
- Designing, maintaining, and improving websites and other technical tools for advising requires expertise and resources. How vital is technology to facilitating our institution's academic advising processes? How effective are our digital communication efforts for engaging students? What digital tools do we aspire to develop and use?
- How do faculty advisors expect professional advisors and others to assist them with providing high-quality and holistic academic advising to students?

- Do we have a comprehensive inventory of our academic advising resources? How can we analyze how advising websites and other communication tools present academic advising information that helps students (and other stakeholders) engage with advising?
    - How do students find and utilize academic advising resources?
    - What language do we use in our digital communications and advising sessions to encourage students to utilize our services? Are we using jargon that needs translation (e.g., what is a fellowship)? Do our sites use a dialogic approach that invites students to engage with us?
    - Do our online tools help students reflect on their experiences and articulate goals? Do they help advisors develop relationships with students?
    - Do our websites offer micro affirmations of support for diverse student populations?

Developing a Shared Understanding of Equity and Inclusion for Advising

- How does our institution currently define equity and inclusion? Does our division or unit actively use this framework when designing our services?
- Do we delineate and mitigate equity gaps in not only six-year completion rates but also feeling a sense of belonging, participating in high-impact practices, achieving integrated learning, and experiencing personal fulfillment?
    - How do students experience the learning environment? What changes over time do students experience, and how are they supported?

    - Do students from minoritized backgrounds experience different rates of belonging in academic and social communities?
    - What are the participation rates in high-impact practices, and how can academic advising support more significant participation in them?
    - For students who encounter academic challenges, what advising practices best support these students?
- Enhanced advising for FGCS and low-income ("FLI") students at highly selective institutions is a recent development. What are our current strategies for providing enhanced academic advising/guidance and support for diverse student populations? Do other cohorts need enhanced support that our system does not offer (e.g., HUG students, Asian American students, female-identified students in STEM, students with executive function or social anxiety challenges, LGBTQIA+ students)?

(Qualitative) Assessment of the Learning Process and Advising Experience

- Do we collect more than satisfaction data about students' experience with advising? How have we used student data to improve our academic advising delivery? Do we actively include the student voice in our assessments?
- Do we collect data about the faculty's experience advising students?
- How can we receive ongoing qualitative information from students and advisors to improve the advising system and ensure that all students experience integrated learning? How can we gather reflections and feedback from students about their enrollment-to-completion experiences and how advising resources support students or are absent from their experiences?

APPENDIX H

Recommended Reading

Academic Advising Best Practices

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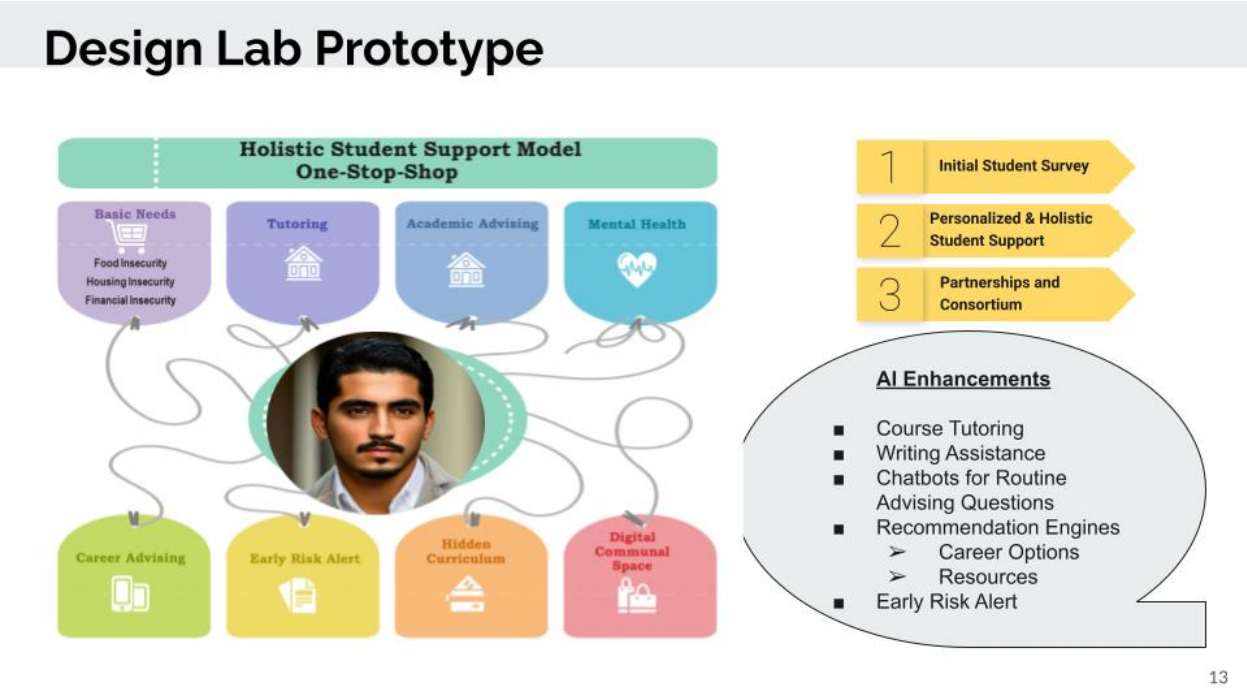
APPENDIX I

Prototype of AI-Designed Advising System

Figure 24

"Designing Holistic and Personalized Support Systems" Class Project

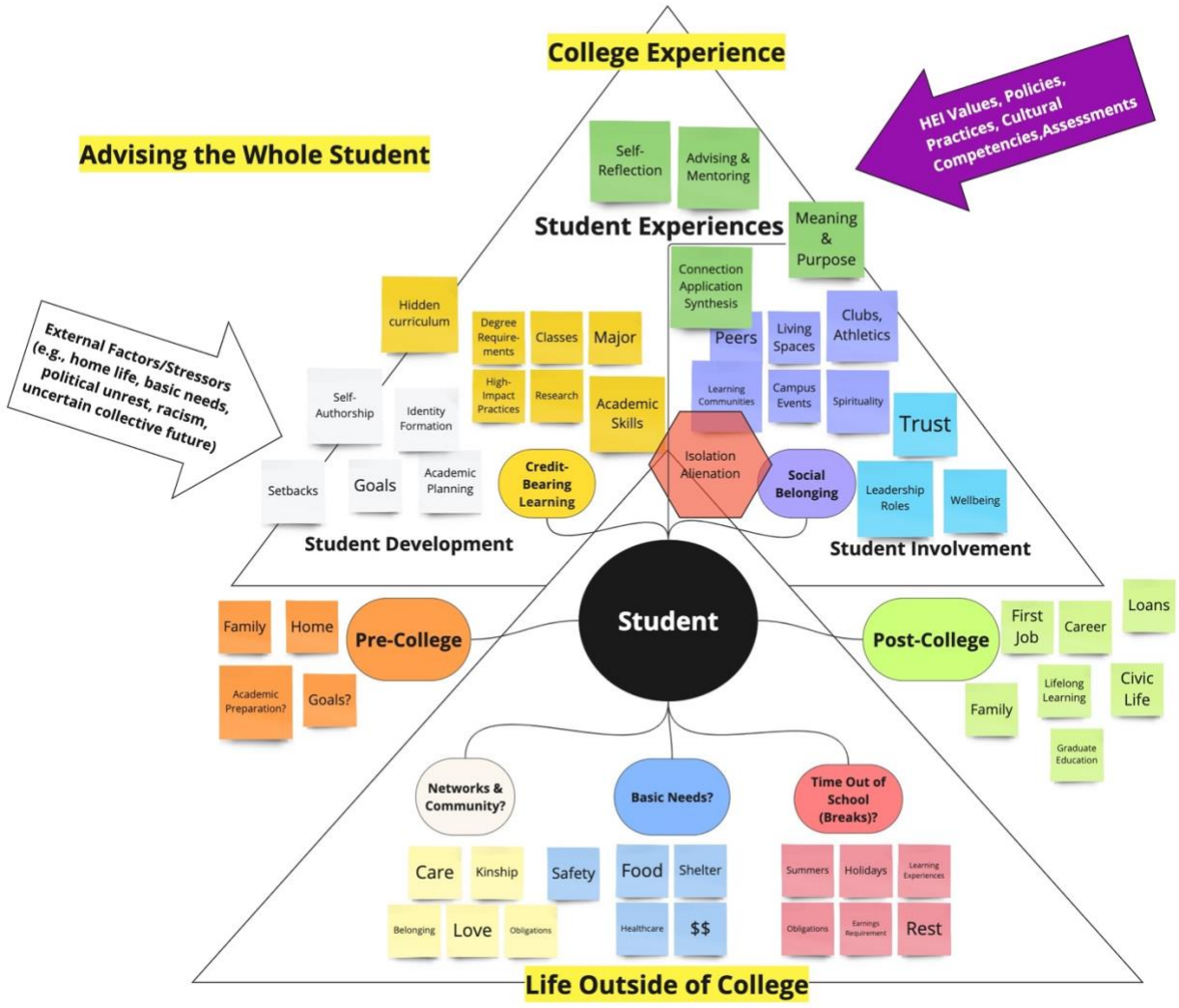


Note: The AI protype includes a potential "persona," a nontraditional-age student user at a four-year private university. The protype would deliver useful information and resources to the persona through a portal designed to deliver information using predictive analytics–an example of a holistic and proactive advising approach (Museus & Ravello, 2010). Figure 24 is part of a slideshow from a class presentation, *Designing Holistic and Personalized Support Systems* by Peggy Chang, Yasmín Nuñez, and Kristen Stone, December 9, 2022 (https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1W2Otf6EZ2ST5IJxb_sduidwqRQTdOQ3XsbyGimpCpw8/edit?usp=sharing). Copyright 2022 Peggy Chang, Yasmín Nuñez, and Kristen Stone.

APPENDIX J

Figure 25

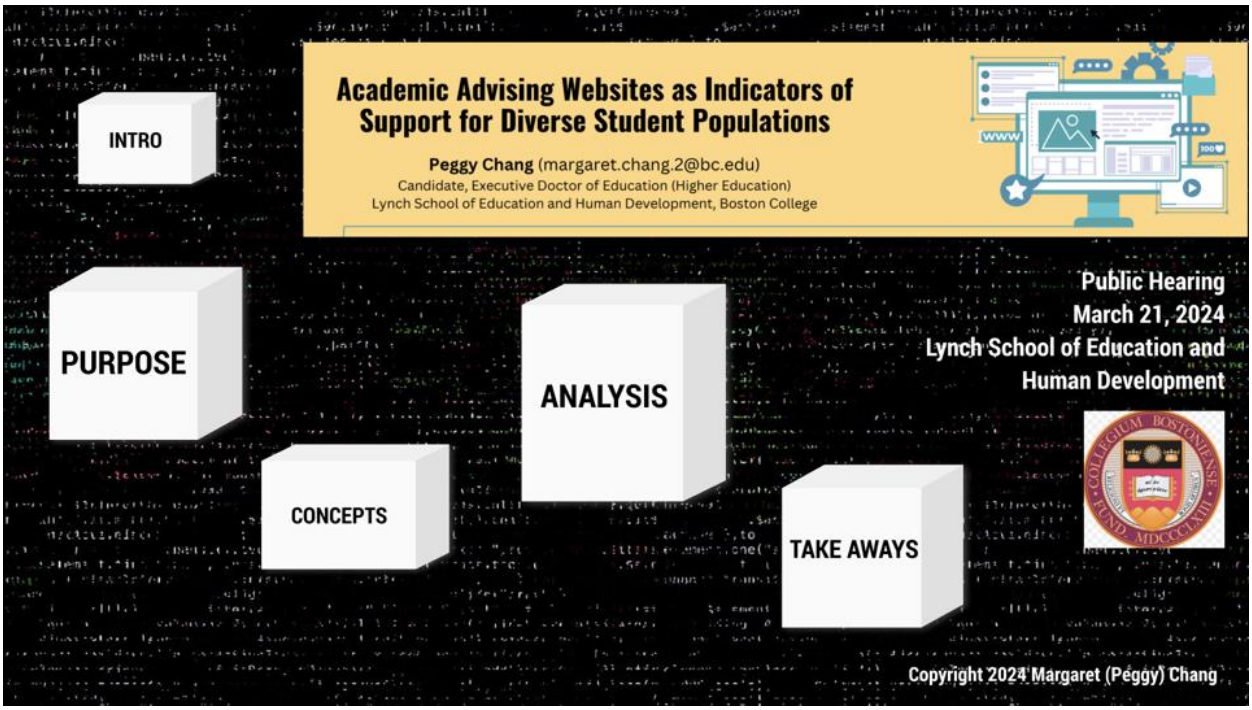
Advising the Whole Student



Note: Inspired by and expanding on Astin's theory of student involvement (1970, 1999); minoritized student expectations for humanized, holistic, and proactive academic advising (Museus & Ravello, 2010); liberal learning integration theory (Barber, 2020); sense of belonging theory (Strayhorn, 2019); and my study's findings about the importance of holistic advising, the visualization in Figure 25 represents some of the specific elements in need of holistic advising support mentioned on the 20 HEI websites: 1) student development, involvement, and experiences in college; 2) pre-college experiences, initially-articulated goals, and academic preparation; 3) the student's life experiences during and outside of college; 4) potential external stressors (familial or societal); and 5) post-college planning and goals. The upper triangle represents time in college, and the lower triangle represents time during college but while not in school. Institutional values, policies, practices, cultural competencies, and assessments influence how students experience college.

APPENDIX K

Public Hearing Slides



Note: For the full presentation, visit https://bit.ly/chang_dissertation. Copyright 2024 Margaret (Peggy) Chang.