

## **CFA's Final Recommendation on the Assessment of Advising**

Date: May 11, 2022

**Background:** In February of 2020, the Steering Committee issued a charge to CFA to recommend an approach for formative assessment of advising at the level of the College, schools, departments, and programs. This request originated in the Undergraduate Advising Policy and Practices document that was approved through Governance in 2016. Several governance bodies have worked to develop an advising assessment instrument, including the Advising and Student Support Program Council (ASSPC) and the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP), but an assessment approach has not been proposed (due to Governance restructuring, the ASSPC is no longer in existence). Since issuing the Assessment of Advising charge in 2020, Steering convened a Task Force to investigate models for advising strategies, and that group issued a report at the end of the 2020-21 AY, after CFA had completed our work on the Assessment of Advising Recommendation. As a result of this timing, CFA was not able to utilize that ad hoc report in developing the Preliminary Recommendation.

A rich body of published literature, potential survey instruments, and ASSPC reports were available for CFA to consider when developing the recommendation. We also relied heavily on practices established by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), as well as on current practice at TCNJ. At the outset of our work, CFA articulated several points that guided us:

- We recognize that the official advising strategy used at the College is a Faculty-Advising model, but there are distinctive differences in how advising is done in individual Schools. Many times, these differences reflect discipline-specific variation in the nature of advising/information needed by students in different programs and it seems clear that individual Schools have generally established their procedures to appropriately serve their students.
- We also recognize that there are two critical aspects to academic advising; developmental and transactional components, which should both be evaluated in any assessment strategy.
- In addition to assigned academic advisors, students develop relationships with a variety of individuals across campus and we suspect that most students get advice and mentoring from multiple individuals, in official and unofficial capacities.
- Gathering information from students, as well as from individuals who serve as advisors is critical to assessing advising.
- Our instinct, which has been confirmed by LaMont Rouse in the Office of Assessment, is that the threat of survey fatigue is a valid concern, and we should be conscious of not duplicating current efforts or adding to the survey burden for students.

CFA Developed a Preliminary Recommendation and shared it with stakeholder groups for testimony. CFA received Faculty Senate testimony at the December 1, 2021 Faculty Senate meeting. Staff and student input was collected at the February

16, 2022 Staff Senate meeting and the February 2, 2022 Student Government meeting. A Qualtrics survey was also distributed to faculty, staff, and students. There were no substantive concerns raised in the various stakeholder meetings. Community members appreciated the expanded use of a currently used instrument (NSSE), as the opportunity to benchmark against other schools and not adding a completely new survey instrument to student expectations were both seen as major advantages. Moving forward, many expressed an interest in the College sharing NSSE data more transparently, and in encouraging Schools and Departments to use this information when designing more local assessment tools.

### **Final Recommendation**

1. The College participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). This survey instrument is deployed to first year and fourth year students on a 3-year cycle. TCNJ has NSSE data from 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and we plan to participate again this year. The NSSE instrument has a module for assessing student opinions about advising, and this module was included in our 2018 survey.
  - a. **We recommend that the College continue to use the NSSE advising survey tool.** There are several critical benefits to doing this:
    - i. Students are already participating in this survey, and the College has an organized and deliberate approach to encouraging participation.
    - ii. As a professionally developed survey instrument, the questions have been widely vetted, scientifically validated, and verified.
    - iii. The data is benchmarked against other national institutions and reports can be tailored to fit our needs.
2. There is an accompanying Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) that surveys advisors' attitudes and opinions about advisement.
  - a. **We recommend the College utilize the FSSE to survey the opinions and attitudes of advisors about advisement of students.**
3. Collectively, these two survey instruments (NSSE and FSSE) will allow us to assess student and faculty opinions about advising from a broad, institutional perspective on a regular cycle, with extensive opportunities for data mining and benchmarking.
4. In order to provide more frequent and discipline-specific information to regularly improve the nature of advising, **we recommend that Schools develop survey instruments that can be deployed annually.** We suggest these surveys focus on advising from a school-wide perspective, which will provide opportunities for specific questions and open-ended responses.
5. The survey data already collected could inform many groups on campus as they consider program, policy or procedure issues. **We recommend that campus constituents be made aware that this data is collected and that an institutional summary of the results be shared regularly and archived in an easily accessed location. These bench-marked, high-level findings should be utilized by Schools when they design local assessment tools.**