Hanover College Student Perceptions of Academic Advising

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In this study, we looked about academic advising in order to figure out the way to improve advising on our campus and how to improve the success of our students at Hanover College. Academic advising has been used on campuses for decades, the position of advisor was created in order to provide a resource to students about the school and to help guide them to make the best choices when it comes to their education and their future. In this study, we looked at different articles and studies in order to figure out what universities could be doing better in order to best serve their student body. We discussed how advising is different for different races and ethnicities, how it looks different for international study abroad students, first generation students, etc. What we found will help us to make the advising experience for our students here at Hanover better, and how to improve those relationships between student and advisor for the best success for both student and university.

Advising Models used at other institutions: who and how advising works

In the article *New Direction for Higher Education,* Kathryn Nemeth Tuttle classifies different types of advising and who is doing the academic advising at different college campuses. A *faculty-only* model assumes that only classroom teachers will serve as academic advisors for students. This type of advising was previously used in many institutions of all sizes until recently, when professional non-faculty advisors began to emerge. As of 2000, only about 15% of public 4-year institutions use the faculty-only model. The *split model* is specifically used for students in designated groups, like undeclared or pre-health majors. In the split model, some students are assigned an advising center advisor, while others are assigned to a faculty member in their major. A *supplementary model* is where all students are assigned to a faculty advisor, but a general advising office helps supplement the faculty member's expertise, often with general education advising or pre-professional advising. The *total intake model* is when the staff advise all students for a particular period of time and then transfer them to the department of the students choosing. This model is most often seen in community colleges (Tuttle, 2000). Regardless of who is responsible for advising, academic advising theory and research strategies can be categorized in a few different patterns: a cohort group-level strategy, the individualized developmental strategy, or the just-in-time transactional advising.

Many universities look at advising as a **cohort advising model**, assign-incoming students an academic advisor for an initial time period and class. They have meetings with their students to make sure they are feeling good about school, encourage them to get involved in activities on campus and even go as far as to hand out flyers for these events to the students they think would enjoy it. Strong contact between faculty and students has a significant effect on the wellbeing of the student. Not only does it positively impact their motivation for schoolwork and other things, but their campus involvement and retention are increased. Cohort advising is popular because it

allows students to work together with other students with similar interests or graduation timelines where small sets of students move toward graduation together, with shared experiences (Schroeder & Terras, 2015).

Another advising model is called **developmental advising**, also known as **holistic** advising. This relationship is about mutual discovery, where the student leads themselves in the direction they desire, and the faculty is there to support and guide the student. Advisors consider the student's personal life and their environment and incorporate non-academic factors into the guidance and conversations with students (King, 2005). Developmental advising is different from cohort advising because developmental advising is a more personal or one on one relationship with the student's advisor, whereas cohort is more focused on a group of students with similar interests and goals when it comes to their education and career path.

Holistic advising includes a broad range of advising resources from different areas of campus, including co-curricular, curricular, and career advising. It is used in order to teach a student how to develop their own personal life and career, instead of controlling every aspect of information that comes into the students' hands. Advisors encourage students to be their own person and find out information they need for their own success. Holistic advising was created to develop the student as a whole and not just in academics because the institutions and faculty members believed that the students' short four year spend at a university are only a small portion of where their skills they are taught will be applied (Grites, 2013). The holistic model also encourages the student to use all of the resources made available to them through the institution, including non-faculty advisors. This kind of relationship between advisor and student as a learning experience for both parties (King, 2005). The advisor not only helps the student in the classroom but encourages them in their personal life.

Another theory of academic advising is known as the **transactional** or **needs-based** advising. Rather than guiding a student towards success with their future career and personal life, the advisor is more of a just-in-time resource for students. There is usually an impetus for the interaction between advisor and student, such as a deadline to declare a major or a course requirement. This faculty member is usually assigned to a student when they are coming into the university their first year. Their advisor informs them of GPA requirements, graduation progress, helps them through course selection, provides information about internships, and meets with students to check up with them about their graduation process. This most basic form of advising is the most prescriptive, and it does not involve a lot of agency-building on the part of the student. This type of relationship between faculty member may not be a rich process of self-discovery, and may put pressure on advisors to lead or remind students of deadlines rather than develop a personal relationship (Gordon, 2019).

 In summary, a review of advising research has identified three different methods of approaching academic advising: cohort, development, and transactional. Cohort advising is where one advisor mentors' multiple students at the same point in their academic career all at once, and the students have shared experiences throughout their education. The students may form cohorts based on similar interests, career goals, or academic majors.

Developmental advising is a more personal relationship between advisor and student. It is a mutually-beneficial learning experience for both advisor and student, where the student leads the process and the advisor is there to support and encourage the student when it is needed.

Transactional advising is the most basic form of advising, where the advisor meets with the student regularly and reminds them of specific dates and requirements that need to be met on time. Advisors answer questions and provide resources related to the student's progress toward graduation.

Institutions-may emphasize a certain approach collectively through training academic advisors, or individual faculty members may use one or more approaches as they advise students. Student success is influenced by the type of relationship between advisor and advisee (Gordon, 2019).

In order for a student to succeed, faculty have to balance many responsibilities, such as curriculum knowledge, academic major and career preparation, and academic record-keeping (Tuttle, 2000). On top of the functional responsibilities of advisors, the broader expectation that advisors will help students be successful means that advisors also must know and relate to students on a personal or emotional level. Advisors may encourage students to get involved in campus activities or access campus resources, such as extra-curriculars. Being a part of student life also increases student motivation and student success (Tuttle, 2000). Faculty members have to have a good connection or bond with their advisees in order to make an impact on their life and their decisions when it comes to their future. Sitting down and meeting regularly in order to understand what a student wants is a good way for an advisor to gauge what type of approach they should take with this student compared to the rest of their advisees. Tuttle (2000) notes a decline in student/ faculty contact can lead to a decline in student success.

As an advisor, it may fall to an untrained faculty member to decide which advising method(s) are best and which type of student may respond best to different types of advising (Wilcox, 2016). Some students may benefit from transactional or prescriptive advising, especially when they need guidance about beneficial courses, careers, or graduate school (Forbes, 2021), while others may be able to get that information elsewhere and would prefer to develop a more personal relationship with their advisor. The best model and type of advising may depend on the student's needs, advisor's expertise and interests, and the institutional type.

Challenging Situations in Academic Advising

There can be some challenges when it comes to advising, like a language or cultural barrier between student and faculty, or a lack of time or training for special advising circumstances. Some of the more frequently studied characteristics that students may find challenging to navigate through college include first-generation college students, undecided majors, varsity athletes, or race or ethnic minority students at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

Oftentimes students that are a part of minority groups as well as first generation college students can become overwhelmed with the information they are gaining about their education

and their career paths. Students of color at PWIs can often also feel overwhelmed in their new environment. Students of color have reported feeling uncomfortable on campus due to feeling excluded from activities where the majority of individuals attending are white. There have also been findings of African American students reporting racial incidents to their authorities or advisors (Lee, 2018). While institutions of higher education may not believe their policies are discriminatory or oppressive to students, it is those same policies that have conferred dominance and power through centuries of higher educational institutions, rules by which privilege allows certain aspects of power to become normalized and supported. In some situations, students from historically marginalized groups may seek out someone on campus who can understand their experience and who they can trust (Charles and Stewart, 1991). Lee (2018) describes specific aspects of academic advising behaviors needed for advisors of Black students at PWIs. First, advisors must affirm students to believe and understand their racialized experiences at the PWI, including listening and being empathetic for times the student may have experienced microgressions or unwelcomed behavior. Lee suggests using *microaffirmation*, by advisors to show students inclusion and to help them develop self-efficacy in the college environment. Academic advisors should also add culturally focused support opportunities for non-white students, connecting students to academic resources, post-graduation and career resources, and to making connections to social and professional networks. Lastly, Lee (2018) suggests that advisors at PWIs should go beyond concern for students and use their expertise and power in the university to advocate for change in order to identify areas for resources or improvement, or to identify and change policies that are inequitable or exclusionary.

Sometimes students may experience multiple factors that increase their reliance on academic advisors as support for the transition from enrollment to graduation. In a qualitative study of first-generation undecided students, a common theme was that students experienced stress and anxiety in some of the more "typical" activities related to college, such as filling out financial aid forms, answering questions about intended major, or discerning a major. For these students, social support from roommates and their first-year seminar class and advisors was particularly helpful in helping them form a transition community. As first-generation students with undecided majors, it was especially important to get involved with the campus community for them to understand the culture. Advisors were seen as translators of information, but some students did not know how to approach their advisors or how advisors could help them beyond selecting classes (Glaessgen et al., 2018) or they were unsure how an advisor was different from a high school guidance counselor (Walker, Zelin, Behrman, Strnad, 2017) and did not visit advisors frequently. For academic advisors with first-generation undecided students, it seems especially important to form connections with students outside of class and to help them understand both academic and social structures of the campus.

In summary, a holistic approach to advising supports research on students of color at PWIs and students who enter campus as undecided first-generation students. These students will benefit from a more intentional, holistic view of expectations and support structures. Providing students with extra layers of support will help with self-efficacy and retention.

Becoming an academic advisor is a major time commitment, faculty members spend long hours meeting with their advisees on top of teaching courses and other obligations they have for their main position at the universities. Advisors may need specific training in order to better prepare themselves for student circumstances, and advisors may also feel "on call" for their advisees whenever they have questions or concerns. Because there are several different expectations for what makes a person a competent and effective academic advisor (Moore, Wallace, & Dietz, 2003) and advising is central to student retention and success, we posed the following research questions about advising at Hanover College:

RQ1: How do Hanover College students reflect on their advising needs? And what are their experiences in regard to academic advising?

RQ2: How do Hanover College students identify characteristics of their ideal advisor?

RQ3: How might the College improve academic advising, from the perspective of students?

The purpose of this study was to better understand the Academic Advising process at Hanover College and to attempt to examine improvements in the process for future Hanover students and advisors.

Method

A survey asking students to include basic information about themselves as well as questions to divide our study group into specific categories such as race and ethnicity, important information about their identity, etc. The survey was sent out to the entire student body of Hanover College in the two-week period following course registration for the Fall 2021 semester. The survey protocol was approved by the Hanover College Institutional Review Board. Students who accessed the survey link were incentivized by entering their name in a drawing for one of two $25 cash prizes.

Participant Demographics

In our study, we asked basic questions that we believed would bring us the most accurate results in order to better the academic advising process that Hanover College implements into its institution. In order to collect the most equally represented data we encouraged students from many different grades, ages, majors and racial and cultural ethnicities to participate in our study. We asked these students to click all that apply to them, so we understood exactly what our range of diversity looked like. A total of 163 individuals took the time to fill it out and send us their opinions: 91 (55.8%) reported having transferred credits from another institution, 63 (38.7%) were varsity athletes, 60 (36.8%) came to Hanover as an undecided major or were currently undeclared in their major, 50 (30.7%) students described themselves as first generation students, 41 (25.2%) were Pell-Grant eligible, 33 (20.2%) as a double major, 21(12.9%) said their primary residence greater than 250 miles from Hanover College,15 (9.2%) were racial or ethnic minority persons, 14 (8.6%) changed their major interest after declaring their major, and 5 (3.1%) of the students were transfer students.

Participants were spread fairly evenly across academic years: 27% first year, 25% second year, 29% third year, and 19% fourth year. Divisions represented included: 58.3% Natural Sciences (*n* = 95), 28.2% Social Sciences, 11.0% Arts & Letters, and 1.9% A large majority of respondents (79%) planned to graduate in four years, while some were planning to graduate in fewer than four years (15%) or more than four years (5%).

Study Results

In order to understand the perceptions of some common advising-related tasks that students regularly complete with the help of academic advisors, we asked the students to rate the ease or challenge of 10 items related to academic course progress: register for courses online, add or drop a class, get into a class you need to stay on track for graduation, get added into a class that is full, remove a hold on your account, declare your academic major, apply for graduation, view transfer credits or course history, know which ACE/CCRs you have completed, and find an academic advisor in my major. Students could select, "*very challenging for me*" (coded as -2), "*somewhat of a challenge for me*" (coded -1), "*somewhat easy for me*" (coded 1), "*very easy for me*" (coded as 2), or "*I have not experienced this*." The final item was not included in Table 1 challenge rankings. Negative numbers represent tasks that students, on average, felt was more challenging, and positive numbers reflect tasks that students found easier.

The four most challenging tasks, in which students reported they needed most help from advisors were all related to course registration: getting added into full classes, getting into classes needed for graduation, registering for classes, and adjusting schedules. When it came to registering for classes 7.4% of the students said it was very challenging for them, 37.7% said it was somewhat of a challenge, 29% said it was somewhat easy for them, and 25.9% said it was very easy for them to register for classes. But that shows that 45.1% of the students had an issue with registering for classes. When the scenario "Getting in a class that is full" was applied, 26.7% said very challenging, 29.8% said somewhat challenging, 23.6% said they had not experienced this, 14.9% said it was somewhat easy, and only 5% said it was easy for them. In regard to the easiest tasks, students reported that finding an academic advisor in their major was the easiest, with 76% saying it was somewhat or very easy.

Table 1. Advising tasks rated by challenge and ease for students.

Most Challenging Tasks to Easiest Tasks	Mean (Standard Deviation), and mode
Get added into a class that is full	*m*= -0.76 (*sd* = 1.29), *mode* = -1
Get added into a class that you need to stay on track for graduation	*m* = -0.22 (*sd* = 1.37), *mode* = -1
Remove a hold on your account	*m* = 0.14 (*sd* = 1.43), *mode* = 1
Register for courses online	*m* = 0.28 (*sd* = 1.39), *mode* = -1
Add or drop a class	*m* = 0.46 (*sd* = 1.26), *mode* = 1
Know which ACE/CCRs you have completed	*m* = 0.80 (*sd* = 1.29), *mode* = 1
View your transfer credits or course history	*m* = 0.88 (*sd* = 1.24), *mode* = 2
Declare your academic major	*m* = 0.92 (*sd* = 1.24), *mode* = 2
Apply for graduation (rising seniors only)	*m* = 1.08 (*sd* = 1.22), *mode* = 2
Find an academic advisor in my major	*m* = 1.53 (*sd* = 0.89), *mode* = 2

In the next question, we asked for written responses from the student body. The question was "What are some things you wished were different about the tasks above?" The majority of the written responses mention a need for a better class registration process. They stated that the process is time consuming and stressful, especially in larger-demand majors and in courses that are required and full before registration time. Students wanted class sizes to increase in order to allow more students that need to take a certain class by a certain time. A few students mentioned that they wanted additional input from their advisors during the advising and registration process would allow for the student to stay on track for graduation, suggesting that meetings with academic advisors should be required, or that the advising period should be extended or the hours for registration should not overlap with classes, but a majority of students described challenges related to the online course registration system, including the website, the difficulty of getting added into ACE/CCR courses that fill quickly, the need to have more available seats in high-demand courses. The open-ended responses to this question emphasized that even the tasks that were rated closer to a 1 on the quantitative scale (somewhat easy for me), students still wanted (and sometimes demanded!) improvements in the process.

Not surprisingly, first year students seemed to struggle most with finding information and keeping track of which courses they needed or wanted. One first year student said, *"Make the website more user friendly. It's so difficult to find or access anything unless you know your way around. Also, the system in place makes it difficult for students to get into classes unless they're a senior. Prioritizing seniority over actual need is not a good idea,"* and another, *"I wish it were easier to view the course catalog and see when what classes are available and when. I would also like to know what CCRs, and ACEs I've completed without actually doing it myself. I wish there were a more convenient way to see my track for graduating and completing my major."* Upper-level students echoed a common theme: more available course seats, especially in Natural Science and Social Science courses. Juniors and seniors cited specific course planning challenges, such as under- or over-loading courses, completing courses required for a major while also completing comprehensive exams, and courses being offered every other year or at irregular schedules.

In the following question, we asked the students to describe some characteristics of good academic advising and their responses were actually descriptions of their ideal advisor: *"Good communication, knowledgeable about courses, knowledgeable about career expectations/ requirements," "Reaches out to the student to see if they need help,"* as well as *"Involved. Not overly busy or overwhelmed. Supportive. A good listener. Positive outlook."* When considering what makes a faculty member a great advisor, students want someone who has interpersonal skills and is interested in helping: Are they committed to their students, are they caring and a good listener? These are all qualities that the participants listed as good characteristics they want in an advisor. Many mention that an advisor that seems invested in their lives and concerned about their wellbeing is something they want. More qualities that students desire in an academic advisor is that they are a good listener, they are helpful, easily approachable and easy to talk to, they are friendly and relatable. Being able to relate to another person makes it easy to feel

comfortable with them, making the student feel like they can come to their advisor with personal problems. These qualities echoed the importance of advisors being interpersonally competent first and foremost, and knowledgeable about the campus and curriculum second. In the second theme, students wanted a faculty member advisor that understands the process, the requirements for the College graduation, for their major, and someone who can answer their questions about other academic fields.

After asking about characteristics of good advising, we asked students what they needed from their advisor during their time at Hanover. These responses were similar to the characteristics of an ideal advisor in the previous question. Many of the students wanted someone that would keep them on the right track, *"Set me in the right path for what I want"* or to help them through class registration, *"Guide me through the best suited class schedule."* Some students even wished that they had a better more personable relationship with their advisor*, "I wish I had more of a chance to be more personal with my advisor. However, I think that I ultimately need my advisor to walk through my options..."* Many of the students wanted an advisor that was a good resource for them to come to when they need information. Many of the participants stated that they wished for more prescriptive advising help to go to their advisor during course registration to ask them what classes would best fit their schedule and help them graduate on time. These participants wanted an advisor that is both holistically-oriented, caring about their future, and is transactional as well, helping them complete degree requirements.

To understand how students reflect on their current advisor, we asked about how frequently their current advisor engaged in several informational and emotional support behaviors, from $0 =$ *never* to $4 =$ *very often*. In Table 2 below, we summarize these different types of supportive behaviors, based on student responses. First, regarding informational support, the most frequent behaviors that students said their advisors do is respond to their questions (95% said very often or often their advisor is responsive) and discuss how academic coursework relates to goals and future plans (64% said advisors very often or often did). The least frequent information supports what advisors do is give students information about scholarships, awards, and study abroad (47% of students said their advisor seldom or never did this) and connect students to people who could help with financial aid questions (40% said advisors seldom or never did). Hanover College faculty seem to be strongest in providing emotional support to their advisees. Students reported that their academic advisors overwhelmingly respected their identity and culture (96% said very often or often), cared about student's well-being (92% very often or often), while students said 88% of advisors very often or often actively listened to students and 74% often or very often provided emotional support when needed. Student responses to emotional support questions indicated this was an area of strength at Hanover. The areas for improvement in emotional support: 39% of students said their advisors never or seldom reach out to check on their academic performance, and 27% said their advisor rarely or seldom asks them questions about their needs or goals.

Table 2. Advisor support behavior frequencies

Support Behavior	Mean (SD)

Respect your identity and culture	3.68 (0.58)
Care about your well-being	3.57 (0.73)
Respond to your questions	3.56 (0.66)
Actively listen to you	3.35 (0.85)
Provide you with emotional support when you need it	3.02 (1.23)
Encourage you to consider academic opportunities such as study abroad, research, directed study	2.81 (1.20)
Discuss how your academic coursework relates to your future goals and plans	2.76 (1.16)
Encourage you to participate in co-curricular activities	2.57 (1.36)
Give you information about deadlines and policies	2.41 (1.17)
Give you information about tutoring or academic success	2.39 (1.12)
Discuss your plans after graduation	2.29 (1.16)
Ask you questions about your needs or goals	2.27 (1.19)
Reach out to check on your academic performance	1.91 (1.25)
Connect you to people who can help with financial aid questions	1.81 (1.27)
Give you information about scholarships, awards, and study abroad opportunities	1.71 (1.19)

Supplementary Analyses: Are some student experiences different from others?

To examine the question above, we used student self-reported demographic characteristics that have been associated with student retention at Hanover College. We first created dummy codes (0,1) for each characteristic that students used to describe themselves across the 10 demographic characteristics, such as student athlete, transfer student, double major, racial or ethnic minority student, etc. We used these dummy codes to examine differences in perceived difficulty and ease of advising tasks, as well as support behaviors (behaviors are summarized for entire population in Tables 1 and 2). To analyze this data, we computed a sum score across ten demographic characteristics, such that higher scores were indicative of greater numbers of advising, $M = 2.43$, $sd = 1.24$, range $0 – 7$. We also computed sum scores for advising task difficulty/ease, a sum of the ten advising tasks described in Table 1, $M = 3.90$, $sd = 6.84$, range -13 to 18, and sum scores across all 15 support items described in Table 2, $M = 39.81$, $sd = 11.42$, range $8 – 60$.

First, we used independent samples t-tests to compare individual demographic characteristics with faculty advisor support or perceived challenges in advising tasks. Table 3 lists the means of students who self-identified themselves as a transfer student, their average ratings for the 10 advising tasks in terms of challenging to easy, and their average perception of 15 items gauging their advisor's support behaviors. There were very few significant differences in the means of demographic characteristics compared to all other students. Only in two situations: Pell-Eligible students reported greater average ease across the advising tasks, and student athletes reported greater difficulty across advising and course registration tasks None of the demographic alone were associated with differences in perceived advisor support.

Table 3. Perceptions of challenge and support for specific student demographic features.

Demographic Characteristic	Task Ease for this group	Task Ease for others	Advisor Support Perceptions for this Group	Advisor Support Perceptions for others
Transfer students ($n = 5$)	2.00	3.96 (*ns*)	36.20	39.93 (*ns*)
Double majors ($n = 33$)	5.06	3.60 (*ns*)	37.94	40.29 (*ns*)
Changed major ($n = 14$)	4.36	3.92 (*ns*)	38.21	40.10 (*ns*)
Undecided major ($n = 60$)	2.93	4.47 (*ns*)	40.37	39.49 (*ns*)
Transferred credits from other institution ($n = 91$)	4.11	3.63 (*ns*)	40.76	38.57 (*ns*)
Pell-Grant Eligible ($n = 41$)	6.93***	2.88	37.71	40.53 (*ns*)
Residence > 250 miles ($n = 21$)	4.10	3.87 (*ns*)	38.95	39.94 (*ns*)
Varsity athlete ($n = 63$)	2.06**	5.07	40.97	39.10 (*ns*)
Minority race or ethnic group ($n = 15$)	3.40	3.96 (*ns*)	41.80	39.61 (*ns*)
First-generation ($n = 50$)	2.62	4.47 (*ns*)	39.67	39.91 (*ns*)

Notes. Higher scores reflect greater average ease or greater support. *ns* indicates that the means are not significantly different at the $p < .05$ level for two-tailed t-tests.

*** $p < .001$. Low-income students who were eligible for Pell Grants found it significantly easier than other students to complete advising tasks, $t(160)=3.38$.

** $p < .01$. Varsity athletes found advising tasks significantly more difficult than non-athletes, $t(160) =2.78$**.**

Corroborating other academic research about varsity athletes, and probably likely due to their concerns over scheduling classes around athletic training and events, Hanover College student athletes reported greater difficulty in advising tasks than did non-athletes. In contrast to what we may have predicted based on previous academic work, our Pell-eligible students reported that their advising tasks were significantly easier than the non-Pell students. This may be reassuring that our campus support staff who work with low-income students are providing the support and resources for students who need them most. Though not significantly different, Table 3 data shows that first-generation and undecided students tend to find these advising tasks harder than other students. Please interpret the quantitative data in Table 3 with caution, as the numbers of several characteristics are too small to make reliable inferences.

We wondered whether a cumulation of these characteristics could be taxing to some students. For example, do students who have more advising needs (Pell-eligible *and* student athlete *and* first generation student) also report greater transactional advising challenges or levels of support from their advisors? No. Students who had greater advising needs across all 10 items on the checklist (higher scores on the checklist of demographics that are generally associated with advising touch points) did not also tend to also report greater challenge in regards to transactional advising activities, such as registering for classes, changing their schedules, finding an academic advisor, etc., $r = -0.046$, $p > .05$, and they did not tend to report any differences in advisor support behaviors, $r = -0.007$, $p > .05$. These findings indicate that students who had more cumulative advising need characteristics, such as student athletes, with family support far away from campus, students who transferred in units, or first-generation or Pell-eligible students, did not differ in their reports of advisor support behaviors or how challenging they thought advising tasks were.

Summary and Conclusions

In this cross-sectional survey of student perceptions, we found broad support for current academic advising practices at Hanover College. We found that students reflect quite positively on their experiences, that they largely prefer holistic advising communication that favors a personal relationship and advisor who cares about them beyond academics, and students also voiced changes needed for the transactional components of advising that deal with course registration. Using the data that we have collected; we may be able to improve specific aspects of student advising experiences at Hanover College.

How do Hanover College students reflect on their advising needs? What are their experiences in regard to academic advising? Students want advisors who they can relate to on a personal level, who ask them about their needs, and who provide them with information and emotional support. In line with holistic advising models described in the literature review, and in other research (Walker et al., 2017), students at Hanover crave advisors who view them as a whole person, not just in the classroom or during course registration times. Hanover College students listed characteristics like caring, readily available, easily approachable, friendly, knowledgeable, organized and much more when describing their ideal academic advisor. They want to be able to get along well with their advisor as well as relate to them on a personal level, acknowledging that an ideal advisor is caring, knowledgeable, and accessible. Most of the

students at Hanover college feel that their experiences with their academic advisor have been very positive, but they understand that there is room for improvement, especially in regards to the course registration process. Based on the qualitative and quantitative feedback from students in this report, our recommendations for improvement include changes to the transactional advising process that is most impactful for student retention. Some actions that Hanover College may take to improve advising:

- Consider historical enrollment data as well as current student enrollment and number of majors in determining which courses will be offered and how many seats to offer or reserve
- Use a waitlist for every class and employ waitlists as a way to automatically add students or sections to high-demand courses
- Show progress toward graduation, including ACE/CCR completion and outstanding progress for all students – especially first and second year students
- Provide support for students who struggle with restrictions for course registration (including student athletes)
- Encourage faculty advisors to check in on students regularly and ask them about their needs and goals
- Continue to support students interested in study abroad, scholarship, financial aid opportunities, and financial aid counseling

Our quantitative survey results did not reveal significant differences in student perceptions based on a list of key student features that often lead to greater advising need. For example, based on previous research, we thought that certain student populations (e.g., first-generation students, students from racial or ethnic minority groups, transfer students, or students who had changed their academic major) might report greater needs in regards to advising help. In our small sample, we did not find significant differences between these characteristics in terms of how students felt advising tasks were easier or challenging for them or how supportive they felt their advisor was. We did find two groups of students, Pell-Eligible students, who felt their advising transactions were easier than other students, and student athletes, who felt advising transactions were more challenging for them. These findings could benefit from additional triangulation and inquiry. Perhaps there are other characteristics, such as academic major, or the advising load of the faculty member, that contribute to student advising experiences in ways we did not measure in our survey. Our study is limited in that our data represents a sample of about 15% of Hanover College students; perhaps over-represented in certain academic majors and perhaps biased in that students who completed a survey about academic advising may be more satisfied with their own academic advisors than students who declined to participate. Regardless, we feel this survey represents a cross-sectional glimpse of student perceptions in the weeks following course registration at Hanover College.

In summary, there are some ways that Hanover College can improve academic advising. Not surprising given the timing of our advising survey falling right after course registration period, many want a better course registration experience. The greatest improvement to student experience seems to be related to transactional advising (completing tasks related to on-time

graduation progression). Our survey responses indicate that developmental or holistic advising is already happening at Hanover College. Students reported high degrees of emotional support from faculty advisors, and they overwhelmingly described ideal advisor characteristics that were related to whole student advising: having someone who is a good listener, who cares and responses students, is very important. Secondarily, being knowledgeable about the curriculum and helping students make decisions about courses, life after graduation, and degree progress is important. Overall, the student survey did not indicate that we need an overhaul in the way faculty communicate with students. Some smaller improvements, such as informing students of scholarships, financial aid opportunities, and how to register for classes in the least stressful way, would be beneficial to students. There are some small changes Hanover College can make to their academic program to make it the best for their students and not all of these changes are costly.

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