

# Academic Advising in British Columbia

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*Prepared by Dr. Linda Pardy, University of the Fraser Valley*

*March 2016*



Research by

**BCCAT**

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# Introduction

The term “advising” has been used by various areas within post-secondary education institutions in British Columbia and across Canada to describe a variety of activities and tasks that result in providing information to students. The post-secondary education environment in BC has evolved over the past number of years and student advising has changed along with it. Post-secondary institutions are currently challenged to increase student engagement, improve workplace readiness of their graduates, internationalize, increase retention rates of Aboriginal and non-traditional students, and prepare students for sustained participation in a learning economy. Academic advising plays a pivotal role in supporting student retention and success at post-secondary institutions and continues to adapt to meet these new realities, whether the need is to serve new student client groups or to communicate new academic frameworks and programs. This paper examines the current state of academic advising in BC, references it to the literature on the topic, offers examples of successful practices, and identifies areas for future research.

## Methodology

This study followed four inquiry phases. An environmental scan on the topic was done using published peer reviewed research, conference proceedings, websites, and open source reports on academic advising. This document analysis compared BC advising practices to practices in other areas of Canada and internationally. Criteria for the review included the following: a) the articles must come from peer-reviewed scholarly journals and/or conferences and; b) they must focus on

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aspects of academic advising related to trade, career, or undergraduate degrees. Keywords for the literature search included the following: advising models, best practices in advising, advising as teaching, 21st century advising, advising for diversity/unique populations, advising in a teaching focused university, strategic enrolment management (SEM) and advising, advising retention and success, Aboriginal student advising, advising in higher education, student life cycle advising, and web-based advising. Keywords were used in a variety of combinations to ensure a cross section of the literature was included. An open publication date range was first used to ensure a wide survey of the literature and a second search using a 2010-2014 publication date range was applied to ensure the most current literature was surveyed. In addition, Canadian articles were specifically searched out.

The second phase of the research consisted of an online document analysis of BC Transfer System institutions’ mission statements, charters, online documents, and websites carried out to identify how academic advising was structured in BC. The intent of this process was to create a typology of elements within academic advising across BC institutions.

Phase three consisted of an online survey targeted at individuals either responsible for or directly involved in advising at BC Transfer System institutions. The survey aimed at exploring the perceptions of advisors on the emergent issues and trends in advising practices. The survey was distributed through the BC Registrars Association (BCRA) and the BCCAT Education Planner Institutional Liaison Contacts (EPIC). BCRA and EPIC members were asked to: 1) distribute the survey directly to individuals in their respective institutions that they felt had explicit advising responsibilities and report the total number of individuals they distributed the survey to; or 2) provide the email addresses for those that they felt were involved in advising work. The majority of institutions provided individual advisor email addresses and the survey was distributed accordingly. 273 surveys were distributed and 166 were returned.

The final phase consisted of three focus groups with 5-10 students in each group conducted in a one-hour face-to-face format to assess students' perceptions of and their experiences with advising in their institutions. Groups from a college, a research-intensive university, and a teaching-intensive university were facilitated by an institutional contact person responsible for student services or advising in each institution. A number of students were invited at random to attend the focus group. The students were 19 years of age or older enrolled at any level in a post-secondary institution. The focus groups were organized using a semi-structured interview dialogue technique where the participants felt free to share information they deemed to be important to providing feedback on academic advising. Notes were taken on the group discussion and a thematic data analysis technique was applied to the data collected. Although not generalizable, the results of this part of the study assisted in confirming the emerging themes and issues identified in the literature search and advisor survey.

# Literature Review

## Background

Advising as an activity within post-secondary education has been evolving since the early 1900s “when some high-profiled universities generated concern for students’ academic decision making” (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010, p. 12). Advising was not a separate department, but embedded in the student’s relationship with faculty and focused on the academic development of the student. At this point advising had an academic focus, was student and faculty directed, and separate from counselling and the student’s overall development. By the mid-1920’s faculty were not as involved in mentoring students to create their study plans, the gap between faculty and students widened, and program planning became more of a clerical function—outlining degree requirements to be checked off (Nutt, 2003). This was the beginning of what is currently known as “prescriptive advising.” By the early 1960s counsellors were assigned responsibility for students’ personal/career development and faculty advisors were often replaced with staff advisors with strong clerical skills who understood and checked off each student’s program course requirements. With the growth of student development theory, institutions started to view the role of advising as more than providing information. It was increasingly to facilitate the psychosocial development of students while helping them navigate the “grey” situations of both academic decision making and student support services (i.e., counselling, financial aid). Criticism of the early form of developmental advising was that advisors in the decade after the 1960s were generally not fully trained to provide a heavily focused psychosocial service and it was difficult to determine if a developmental advising model was effective in helping both students and institutions achieve their program planning goals (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010).

Advising as an activity within post-secondary education has been evolving since the early 1900s “when some high profiled universities generated concern for students’ academic decision making” (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010, p. 12).

There was growing concern that advising services were duplicating the efforts of counsellors. Yet at the same time it was acknowledged that students needed slightly more support than just completing a checklist of prescribed requirements.

In 1979 the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was formed in the United States as a professional organization. Its mandate was, and remains, to increase interest in informed and improved practice of advising students<sup>1</sup>. Although BC does not currently have a professional organization for academic advisors, NACADA has geographic regions that include both Canada and the US. BC belongs to the Northwest Region 8 that includes Alaska, Alberta, BC, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and the Yukon Territory.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw institutions turning their attention to student recruitment and retention. The attrition rate of first year students in the US gained national attention and most institutions turned to the newly published work of Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) for ways to improve the learning experience. Institutions looked to academic advising to reduce student attrition and to ease the process of students adjusting to new environments and integrating new information.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/>

The literature cited in this study emphasizes the limited body of literature specific to the Canadian context. Canadian sources tended to cover a wide range of topics and offered examples of practice more than theoretical underpinnings. For example, BCCAT (1997) conducted a survey of advising and admissions personnel that looked at the administrative systems related to transfer. Andres and Finlay (2004) provided examples of programs supporting non-traditional students in BC. Carleton University (2009) reported on their strategy to adopt a developmental approach to advising, while supporting all staff that provide advice to students. Ouellette (2010), in a chapter on student services in universities, briefly mentioned the role of advising in supporting students. Brown and Doyle (2010) described a program at Lakehead University that incorporated individual advising into a transition to university program for non-traditional students. The University of Saskatchewan (2010) shared its National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) external academic advising review findings. Armstrong (2011) conducted surveys with 138 Ontario academic advisors to learn more about their roles and responsibilities while Wilson, McCaughan, and Han (2011) outlined an initiative between Niagara College and Brock University that incorporated specialized advising strategies to increase student access and success. Healthy Minds Healthy Campuses (2015) touched on some issues relating to advising in a graphic recording featured in their January 2015 blog on rethinking success for Indigenous students. Recently, the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) 2015 conference was used to launch a community of practice group for those working in advising and to help promote the exchange of information on advising practice in a Canadian context. Research from this group is not yet available.

## Approaches

As advising evolved it has been influenced by multiple student development and learning theories. These include psychosocial development, cognitive development, and theories associated with personal preference or type. In addition to the various theories that influence advising, the culture and goals of each institution also impact how advising is approached. Institutions have different philosophical approaches to student development, teaching and learning, and student services. Four common approaches to advising are prescriptive advising, developmental advising, proactive (formerly called intrusive) advising, and appreciate advising.

- **Prescriptive advising** is information-based and uses a somewhat linear or one-way approach to communication between the advisor and the student on topics such as program requirements, admission policies and procedures, and course sequencing.
- **Developmental advising** is an ongoing process that encourages personal growth and development in the advisee. Winston, Miller, Ender and Grites (1984) first described developmental advising as a “systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals” (p. 19).
- **Proactive advising** (formerly intrusive advising) is a process by which an advisor takes action in a proactive way to support students. It can take the form of programs or events that provide much-needed information prior to key milestones or can be caseload management. Institutions that use a cohort model

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or have specific student populations such as exclusively international or graduate students often use proactive advising (Varney, 2012).

- **Appreciative advising** is a relatively new and growing advising approach that incorporates elements of both developmental and proactive advising approaches. It creates conditions in which there is shared responsibility between the advisor and advisee. It creates opportunities for students to focus on their strengths and explore various pathways to meeting their goals (Bloom, Hutson & He, 2008).

## Personnel

Advising was first provided to students by faculty members. Today there are a variety of personnel within an institution that may have advising duties.

- **Faculty advisors** are professors, teaching faculty, department chairs, or deans that in addition to their research and/or teaching responsibilities carry a caseload of students that they advise. Research suggests that students who have significant relationships with their faculty members and are actively

engaged in educationally purposeful activities, both inside and outside the classroom, have stronger skills to persist from admission to graduation. Educationally purposeful activities are an individual's "effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings on campus" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602). To ensure faculty-student contact and to establish mentoring relationships, some institutions incorporate faculty advisors-- sometimes referred to as specialist advisors (e.g., a professional advisor with specific discipline knowledge) into their advising approach.

- **Professional/academic advisors** are specifically trained in student development theory and advising practices. Some professional advisors are considered non-instructional faculty members and others may be part of an institution's staff complement. It is a profession that has formalized and grown over the last two decades. The Education Advisory Board suggests that students are better able to locate advising services when a professional advising model is employed (EAB, 2014). Over the past 40-years the expertise needed to advise students at each stage of the student life cycle and to foster their holistic development has resulted in the growth of professional advisors that can collaborate and/or partner with faculty, but that bring more to the advising model than specific discipline/faculty related expertise (Grites, 2013).
- **Generalist advisors** have specific institutional knowledge about policies, systems, and procedures. Admissions or enrolment advisors are considered generalists and are able to provide information about policies and practices related to applying to an institution, transferring between institutions, program requirements, or registering for courses. They are not trained to support students through complex decision making processes or transitions. Program advisors are similar to admissions advisors but they

provide application, registration, and course selection advice to students in a specific program area. They are rarely trained to help students determine if the specific program area is an appropriate choice for their skills, aptitudes, and goals. The work of generalist advisors is not generally captured in the current discourse on academic or educational advising and is more often referenced in the literature on post-secondary admissions practices and strategic enrolment management (SEM).

Nutt (2015) suggested that advising, either through professional advisors, faculty, or a combination of both, should work with students to develop a "Plan B" should they need to revise their goals. This would require professional advisors/faculty to work in collaboration and communication with general/admissions advisors. In addition, there was discussion about the potential for advising to connect academic advising and career advising (e.g., Bellanca & Brandt, 2010; Bratton, Helms Mills, Pynch, & Sawchuk, 2004; Keeling, 2004; Levine, 2005; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Lowenstein (2011), in his thought exercise entitled *Academic Advising at the University of Utopia*, outlined the impact of educationally purposeful activities that include career planning in producing graduates who are capable of attaining their work/life goals. Coates (2015) noted that Canadian students need better, more realistic career planning information. McCalla-Wriggins (2009) provided a rationale for the integration of academic and career advising, and Gordon (2006) noted that there was a "much-needed regular application of career-advising methods and techniques" (p. ix). The need for an academic-career integrated advising approach continues to be expressed as students and families are growing more concerned about job placement outcomes, time-to-degree, and debt load when looking at prospective programs and campuses (EAB, 2012; Kamenetz, 2010; Levine & Dean, 2012). Gordon (2006) and Joy (2004) described how integration of academic with career advising can be an example of the expert lens that professional advising can provide.



## Training

Advising, as a profession, continues to become more formalized and separated from counselling and in some cases faculty work. The need for trained advisors, whether faculty members or professional advisors, can be very important in ensuring advising services are keeping pace with the changing needs of students and an institution's educational goals. The role of advisors has evolved over the years and many advisors have come into the role from a variety of different PSE areas and backgrounds. Some have moved into advising from faculty, counselling, or clerical areas. As a result, their individual knowledge base with regard to student development theories and approaches to advising can vary. Habley (2004) found that professional development directly related to advising was only provided by one-third of US institutions. Armstrong's (2011) study of Ontario advisors reported that 61% of the respondents did not have training explicit to advising practices when they took on their role as an advisor. Hutson (2013) suggested that training for advisors can be done a variety of ways (e.g., online webinars, workshops, learning communities, and local, regional, and national conferences). Nutt (2015) suggested that institutions may want to develop the talents of their advisors to fit their institutional goals, advising model(s), and unique student populations.

## Advising Structures

Organizational cultures, goals, and systems play a role in how advising is operationalized although Kot (2013) noted, that "organizational structures of advising... have not been the subject of much empirical research." Pardee (2004, para 2) identified three organizational structures for the delivery of advising:

- **Centralized:** faculty or professional advisors are housed in one academic or administrative unit responsible for all advising services. Hutson (2013) reported that the centralized model is rarely used be-

cause of a growing demand for institutions to offer support to specific student populations, a growing variety of majors being offered, the changing career goals of students, increases to faculty workloads, and the need for institutions to improve retention rates and provide greater opportunities for students to engage in the larger campus community. Armstrong (2011) found that only 12% of the Ontario respondents were engaged in a centralized advising organizational model. The remaining respondents reported an almost even divide between the use of a decentralized and a shared organizational model.

- **Decentralized:** faculty or professional advisors are located in their respective academic or student service departments.
- **Shared:** advising responsibilities are distributed between a centralized office and various academic units. Advising generally starts in a central administrative unit (e.g., an advising center or admissions advising office). Habley (2004) reported that for US institutions the shared model was used most commonly. The EAB (2013) also found that among larger public research universities the shared-split model was common practice.

There appears to be no clear recommendation as to the best advising model. The EAB's 2012 research found each of the 100 Canadian and US post-secondary institutions interviewed was experiencing challenges with their advising models. Student retention research in both Canada and the US suggested that academic advising is important to improving retention policies and practices, but the research was not able to determine the best organizational model (Grayson & Grayson, 2003). One common recommendation found in the literature was that whatever advising model is used, it should be student-centred, incorporate qualities of professional advising, and address the explicit goals of the institution

(Kot, 2013; Nutt, 2010, 2015). Kot noted that, “Very little attention has been paid to how different advising structures impact academic outcomes” (2013, p. 3-4).

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## Specific Delivery Models

While the delivery of advising services can be described under the three general structures above, NACADA identified seven specific delivery models that describe how academic advising is commonly structured (Hutson, 2013; Kuhlmann, 2004; Tuttle, 2000). These models are:

1. **Faculty-only:** each student is assigned a faculty member, usually in the student’s major program of study, for all academic advising.
2. **Satellite:** sometimes referred to as the multiversity model, this structure has separate advising offices that are maintained and controlled by the different academic subject units.
3. **Self-contained:** all student advising takes place in a centralized office that frequently does not have any direct interaction with faculty. Usually the office is staffed by professional academic advisors and overseen by a dean or administrative director.
4. **Shared-supplementary:** faculty members provide academic advising, but are assisted by professionals in a supplementary office. Often this office provides coordination and training for faculty, as well as additional services such as transcript evaluation and graduation clearance.
5. **Shared-split:** similar to the shared-supplementary model, except that students are grouped for advising according to some measure of their academic progress. For example, students may go to an advising centre until they complete general education requirements and then transition to a faculty member.
6. **Shared-dual:** students are assigned two advisors. Commonly one of those advisors is a faculty member and the other is a professional staff member. The faculty help with curriculum and major sequence issues, and the professional staff member helps with registration issues and general progress.
7. **Total intake:** students enter as a cohort and an advising centre provides the initial advising help. At the point where students have completed their first year, earned a certain number of credits, or met some other pre-set criterion, students are released to faculty for further advising.

Technology was recommended for all prescriptive information and to free advisors' time so that they can focus on the learner's development and not strictly provide course/program information (Nutt, 2015).

## Technology

The use of data, technology, and online resources is becoming an expected standard in most areas of PSE. A challenge facing advising is how to use technology to not only inform practice and support the institution's SEM goals, but to engage with and teach students (Junco, 2014). Previous research noted that the majority of students rated the use of online advising methods effective (Feghali, Zbib, & Hallal, 2011), and reported a high level of satisfaction in being able to seek and receive prescriptive advising help via an electronic social network (Amador & Amador, 2014). Institutions engage students through a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to increase student interaction and to help students develop professional career networks and search for career ideas (Junco, 2014). Technology was recommended for all prescriptive information and to free advisors' time so that they can focus on the learner's development and not strictly provide course/program information (Nutt, 2015). The EAB (2014) recommended flipping the advising service model by using an automated approach to information provision and self-help before offering personalized assistance. Many institutions are using learning management systems, degree audit software programs, and online communication tools to provide prescriptive information to students. Ambrose and Ambrose (2013) used a blended learning method with a learning management system (LMS) to demonstrate strengthened face-to-face advising sessions and enhanced student development. The literature suggested institutions may want to ensure their approach to advising includes a strategic technology plan in terms of the overall cost in comparison to its ability to improve the student experience and increase student success.

## Assessment

There are two main assessment areas discussed in the advising literature. The first is the assessment of advising practices (e.g., Aiken-Wisniewski, 2010; Creamer & Scott, 2000; Robbins & Zarges, 2011). A common source used to assess effective advising practice comes from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), commonly referred to as the CAS Standards. Another assessment practice referred to in the literature is the assessment of student learning outcomes. Keeling and Hersch (2012) suggested that higher education should consider measuring more than throughput, (i.e., getting enough students recruited, admitted, enrolled, retained, and graduated). They recommended that student learning should include some measures that reflect a student's holistic development and not be based solely in a formal classroom setting. High quality advising is a key component in motivating students to "participate in activities that lead to the experiences and desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, learning, and graduation" (Kuh, 2001). Maki (2004), and Nutt (2004) suggested that advising may want to consider developing, articulating, and measuring learning outcomes. These outcomes could evaluate a student's ability to carry out academic and career planning, as well as set goals, and are the benchmarks that may determine effective advising. Nutt (2015) suggested that to measure this type of learning outcome, institutions may want to consider how they are gathering data about their student population and where students are engaging on campus and/or online.

## Students

Today's student population is dramatically different than previous generations in terms of race, ethnicity, proficiency in English, financial status, family experience with post-secondary education, and in terms of their understanding and use of technology (Sandeen, 2015). Advising is often responsible for supporting students as they learn how to plan to succeed. When working with non-traditional students, this may require an awareness of the unique and various barriers that these populations face. For example, Aboriginal students are a diverse body of students and are one of the largest populations of non-traditional students attending Canadian post-secondary campuses (Mendelson, 2006). It can be problematic to group all Aboriginal students together under the assumption that their needs are all the same. At the same time, it is important to ensure Aboriginal learners feel welcome and supported. In addition to the growing population of non-traditional learners, there is the added complexity of what Levine and Dean (2012) described as the differences in what could be labelled as traditional students. Sandeen (2015) labeled these students the 'smartphone generation' and noted that they are much more comfortable using technology to access information than previous generations of students.

The literature suggested that the nature of the student body has changed and students' need for an education is an imperative in today's economy. For the growing diverse group of students attending campus Keeling and Hersh (2012), and Kuh et al. (2007) suggested systems, both advising-based and teaching-based, should consider adopting an asset-based approach (e.g., where advi-

sors/faculty sees the potential in each student's unique strengths, abilities, and/or aptitudes). Advising approaches that recognize student's individual strengths and teach them how to select, navigate, plan, and succeed in a course of study that is aligned with their interests, aptitudes, and career goals is considered best practice.

## Summary

One conclusion that can be drawn from the literature is that there is confusion around the use of the term 'advising' in relationship to academic, professional, or faculty advising. In some cases advising refers to the providing of admissions, course, and program planning information to students. In others, advising can be associated with a wider range of information provided to students including health and wellness, career and personal planning, and financial and other sources of institutional support.

The literature suggests that a "good" advising approach takes a talent development approach and helps students discover a connection between their academic experiences, work/life experiences, their abilities, and future plans. Effective advising systems gradually shift the responsibility of planning, goal setting, problem solving, and career development from the advisor to the advisee (e.g., Cuseo, 2007; Drake, 2011; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Keeling & Hersh, 2012; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007; Nutt, 2000; White & Schulenberg, 2012). Advising has been described as being the hub of the institution that connects students with faculty and support services "offering students the personal connection to the institution that the research indicates is vital to student retention and success" (Nutt, 2003, para. 4).

Advising approaches that recognize students' individual strengths and teach them how to select, navigate, plan, and succeed in a course of study that is aligned with their interests, aptitudes, and career goals is considered best practice.

# Academic Advising

## in the BC Transfer System

This section examines academic advising in BC in light of the themes and topics identified in the literature review and is based on a review of BC Transfer System institutional websites, a survey of advisors in the system, and three student focus groups.

### Website Review

Website and online documents from BC Transfer System (BCTS) institutions were reviewed for advising information for students. All 38 institutions had an online presence although there were a variety of approaches to presenting advising information. Many institutions used a central landing page where information about advising services could be easily located. These landing pages were generally organized into sections according to the student life cycle (e.g., prospects, applicant, and current) or by student type (e.g., domestic, international, mature). In institutions where advising is mainly focused on enrolment or admissions information, access to advising information was part of their admissions and registration pages.

Each of the public colleges, universities, and institutes, including the out-of-province institutions had separate advising web pages and resources for Aboriginal students. The information for Aboriginal students was not usually associated with the institution's general advis-

ing information, giving the impression that Aboriginal student advising is a separate support area and may require Aboriginal students to access two different areas for support. The private institutions did not have advising information specific to Aboriginal students.

All 38 institutions had information on how to transfer and a resource link to the BC Transfer Guide (BCTG). Five institutions linked to both BCTG and BCCAT's Education Planner (EP). Only two institutions had links from their advising pages to provincial career information such as WorkBC and had specific information that demonstrated that academic advising and career advising were integrated in their approach to advising. Institutions provided links to financial aid information and information about how students could access advising support for financial matters. Fourteen institutions referenced linkages to social media.

### Survey Results

A survey was distributed to 273 PSE employees with academic advising responsibilities at BC Transfer System Institutions. A key liaison person from each institution was contacted to ensure the survey went only to those with direct academic advising responsibilities. In some cases the liaison contact provided direct email addresses and the survey was sent directly to each advisor. Other institutions preferred to distribute the survey themselves and then report back the number of individual advisors they sent the survey to. The BCRA and EPIC mailing lists were used to help distribute the

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survey. Appendix One lists the institutions that received an invitation to participate in the survey, and Appendix Two includes a copy of the survey instrument. The respondents returned 166 out of 273 distributed surveys through Simply Survey. There was at least one response received from each of the 38 BC Transfer System institutions. Given the variety of institutional personnel providing advising services and the range of delivery models possible, the survey should be considered exploratory and the responses may not be representative of all those who provide advising services within an institution. Not all respondents answered every question on the survey, and the frequencies reported in this analysis are based on the valid responses to individual questions.

### Personnel

The majority of respondents represented academic advisors without for-credit teaching responsibilities (93% of 153 respondents). Therefore, the responses reflected the views of administrators responsible for advising services (27%) as well as advisors without for-credit teaching responsibilities (66%). Moreover, the respondents from universities (including both research-intensive and teaching-intensive universities) represented 59% of all respondents (Table 1), and the total unweighted averages may be more reflective of the university respondents.

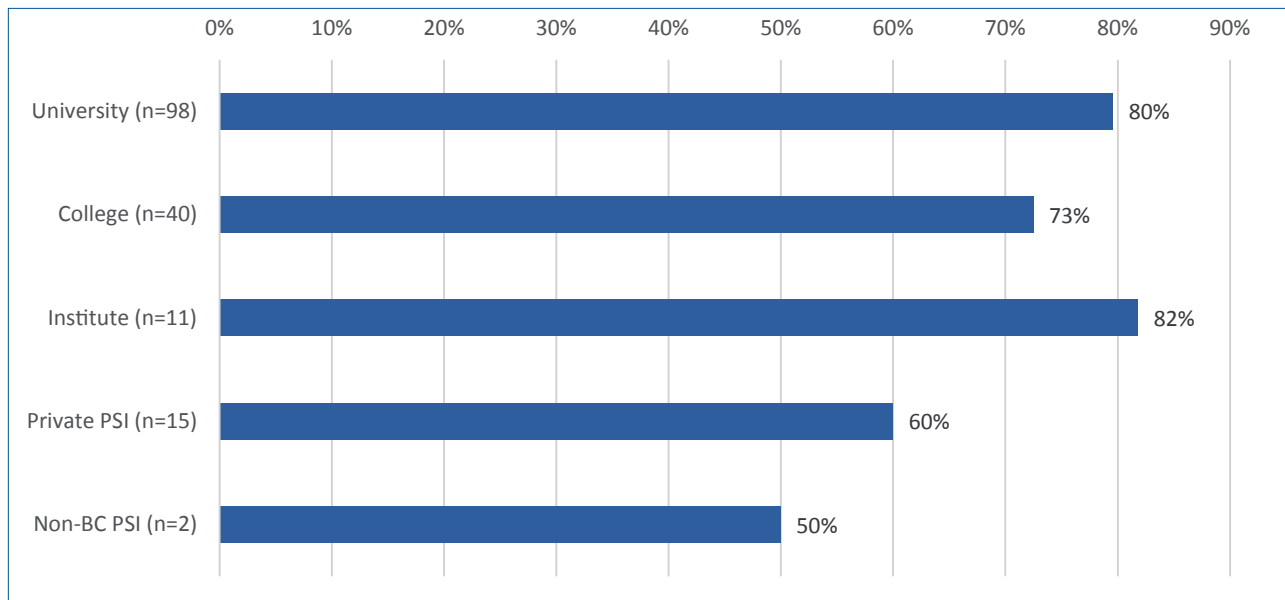
Around 80% of all respondents were required to have a bachelor’s degree. This finding contrasted the previous findings in the literature that advising required a sub-bachelor credential. The requirement for a bachelor degree for advisors was more common at universities and less common at colleges and private BCTS institutions (Figure 1). However, data on advisors’ credentials were not collected, and it was impossible to estimate how many of the respondents had been trained specifically as advisors.

The analysis revealed that the percentage of respondents involved in specialized advising (e.g., equity programs advising, advising for Aboriginal students, students at-risk, or students with disabilities) was around 30%, while more than two-thirds of respondents were directly involved in advising to support the general student population at their institutions (e.g., academic advising, advising prospective students, program advising). About 40% of respondents reported that their advising unit had set expressed learning outcomes. The majority of the respondents did not have learning outcomes set for their advising unit (39%; 50 respondents) or were not aware of advising learning outcomes (22%; 29 respondents).

Table 1. **Survey Participation**

Institution Type	Number of Surveys Sent	Number of Surveys Received	Response Rate by Type	Responses Percent of Total
University	119	98	82%	59%
College	98	40	41%	24%
Institute	15	11	73%	7%
Private PSI	25	15	60%	9%
Non-BC PSI	16	2	13%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>166</b>		<b>100%</b>

Figure 1. **Percent Respondents at Institutions Where a Bachelor’s Degree is Required for Advising**



### *Structure*

The survey used NACADA’s seven different formal models (Kuhmann, 2004; Tuttle, 2000) to assess advising structures. The reported advising models reflected the discourse in the literature. Forty-one percent of survey respondents (60 out of 147 respondents) reported that the advising structure at their institution was the self-contained model. The data suggested that BC institutions and student populations may have different characteristics from many US institutions, because the next most-used model (27%) was a completely customized model designed to fit the needs of the individual institution’s students and faculty (40 of 147 respondents).

Survey responses regarding the reporting structure did not follow King’s (2011) US findings, which noted that 57% of respondents reported to academic affairs and 21% to student services. The current study produced the opposite results (Table 2). These results may be an artifact of the sample (i.e., more administrative participation than faculty advisors) or may be reflective of different reporting structures in BC.

### *Training*

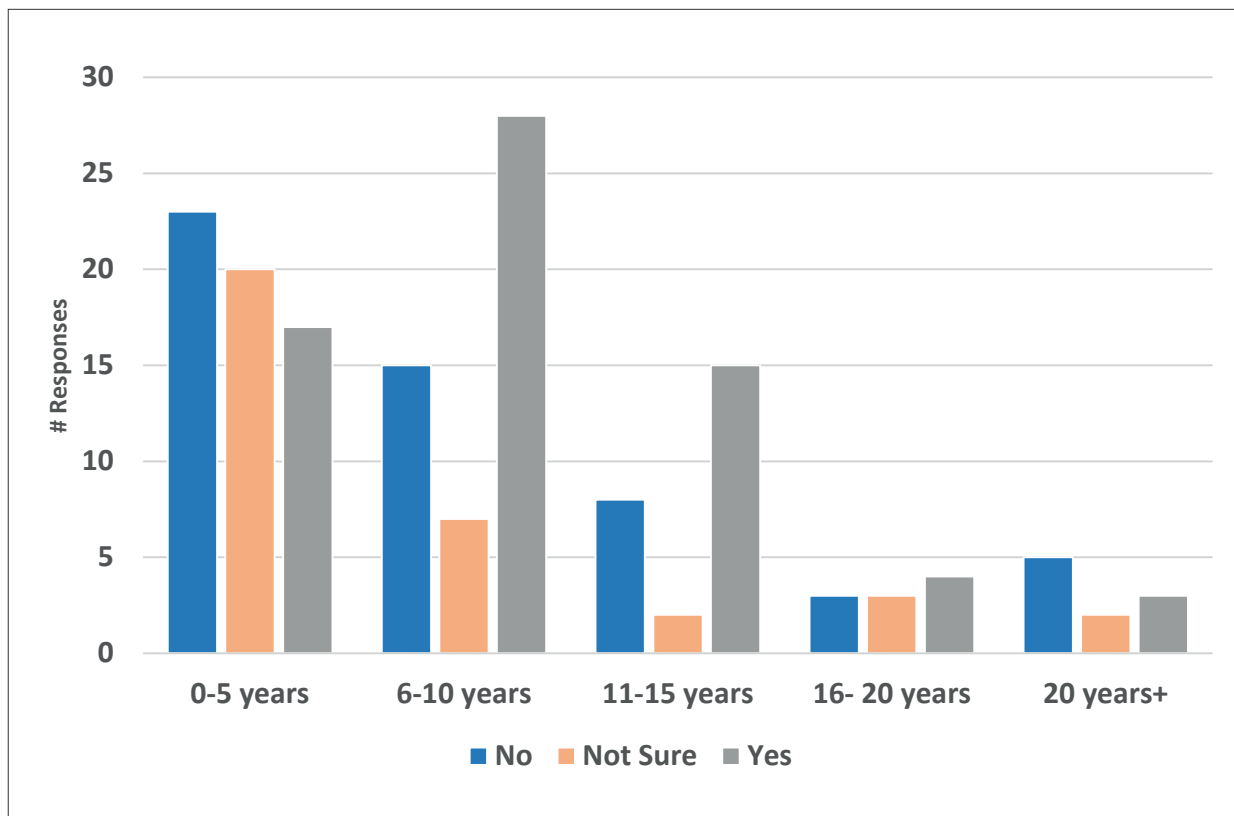
It is rare that a person sets an initial career goal of becoming an advisor. Only 12% of respondents (20 respondents) reported having 15-plus years of employment as an advisor. The majority of the respondents (39%, 60 respondents) indicated they had been employed as advisors for less than six years. New advisors often find their way to advising positions from faculty positions, residence assistantships (RA), or through other clerical or student service jobs. Advisors with fewer years on the job may not be aware of advising resources and professional information.

With regard to resources available for professional development, NACADA membership, as an example of an advising resource, was more widely adopted among advisors who had been longer on the job (Figure 2). Advisors with fewer than six years on the job were much more likely to be unsure of what NACADA was. They were also less likely to be NACADA members. The highest percentage of NACADA membership was reported among advisors who had been working for 11-15 years – 50% of

Table 2. Respondents' Affiliation for Reporting

	# Respondents	% Respondents
Student Services (i.e., Vice-President, Director, Vice-Provost Students, or Manager)	86	57%
Academic (i.e., Provost, Vice-Provost Academic, Dean, Faculty Department Head)	47	31%
Other (e.g., Registrar, Department Head)	19	13%
Total	<b>152</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 2. NACADA Membership by Years as Advisor



the group were members. Survey responses replicated comments in the literature regarding the general lack of professional development (PD) for advisors.

### Delivery Models

The survey contained questions that asked the respondents about the operational settings for advising at their

institution, such as operational aspects, caseload management, and special programs. The respondents indicated that there were many modes of providing advising services to students. The questions asked about face-to-face, on-line, social media, group, and mandatory advising. The results suggested that the majority of the respondents (95%) worked full-time during the day Monday to Friday, with only five percent reporting working evenings or weekends.



Table 3. **The Length of an Average Face-to-Face Advising Appointment by Percent by Institution Type**

Length of Appointment	University (n=78)	College (n=28)	Institute (n=11)	Private PSI (n=9)	Non-BC PSI (n=2)	Total
15-20 min	32%	21%	45%	44%	0%	31%
21-30 min	44%	50%	18%	56%	100%	45%
31-40 min	8%	18%	36%	0%	0%	12%
41 min+	17%	11%	0%	0%	0%	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The survey respondents indicated that the length of a face-to-face appointment was typically 21-30 minutes for all institution types except institutes, where the most appointments (45%) lasted up to 20 minutes (Table 3). The longer appointments (over 31 minutes) were only reported by respondents from universities and colleges.

Slightly less than 50% of respondents reported caseloads of up to 400 students and higher per advisor per year. Such caseloads are above the Habley (2004) recommended ratio of 300 advisees to one. In an Ontario study of advisors, 76% percent of respondents reported a caseload higher than 300, and of those, 45% reported having caseloads that exceeded 900 advisees (Armstrong, 2011). Surprisingly, 14% of respondents in the current study indicated that they did not track the number of students they support. Those who did not track student numbers were predominantly from universities (15% of 80 university respondents) and reporting to student services. Some respondents (8% of 131 respondents) did not work with students directly and therefore could not report their caseload. It should be noted that the ability to calculate a meaningful advisor-advisee ratio was noted as a challenge in the EAB (2012) research that included both US and Canadian institutions.

It might be expected that face-to-face appointments would be difficult for advisors with high caseloads (e.g., up to 600 students per year or more). However, more respondents strongly agreed and agreed that students

could more easily communicate with an advisor in person than online (Figure 3). This phenomenon was common regardless of the caseload: advisors with a high caseload felt as assured that students could easily access services as the advisors with medium or small caseloads. About 70% of all respondents (89 out of 127 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed that academic advisors at their institution were doing an excellent job of meeting the needs of students. However, the survey reflects that advisors' views on ease of access and overall effectiveness may be different from students' perceptions.

Some advising units employed peer advising for current students. However, this delivery model may be underutilised. About 80% of respondents indicated that their advising units did not have peer advisors (Figure 4). Student peer advisors were not common at colleges (7%; 2 of 29 respondents indicated peer advising at their unit) and this type of advising was not used at institutes (0% of respondents).

### *Technology*

Respondents considered face-to-face communication an easier option than online communication. Other respondents' feedback supported the preference for face-to-face advising. The respondents were divided in opinions regarding the effective use of technology for advising purposes. About half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed

Figure 3. Respondents' Level of Agreement with the Statement Whether Students Could Easily Communicate with an Advisor in Person or Online by Institution Type

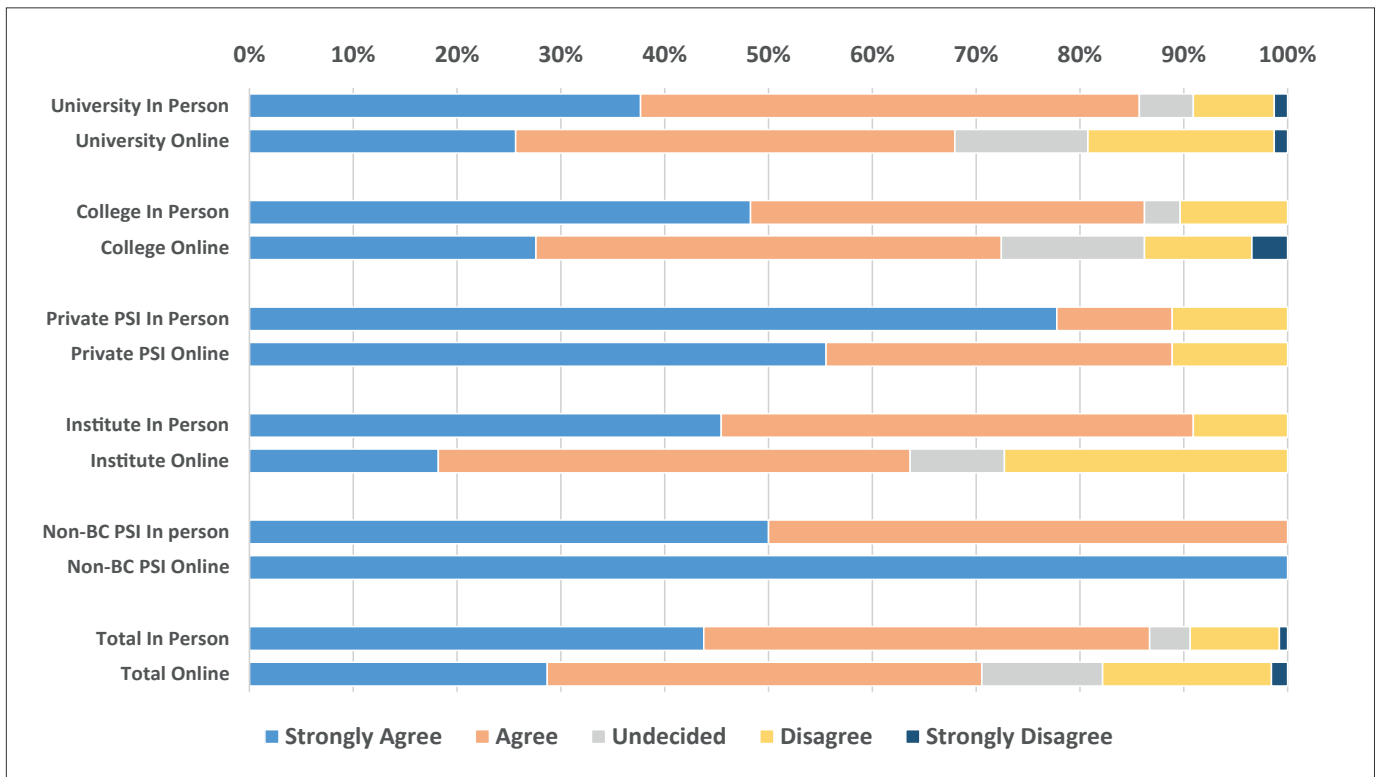
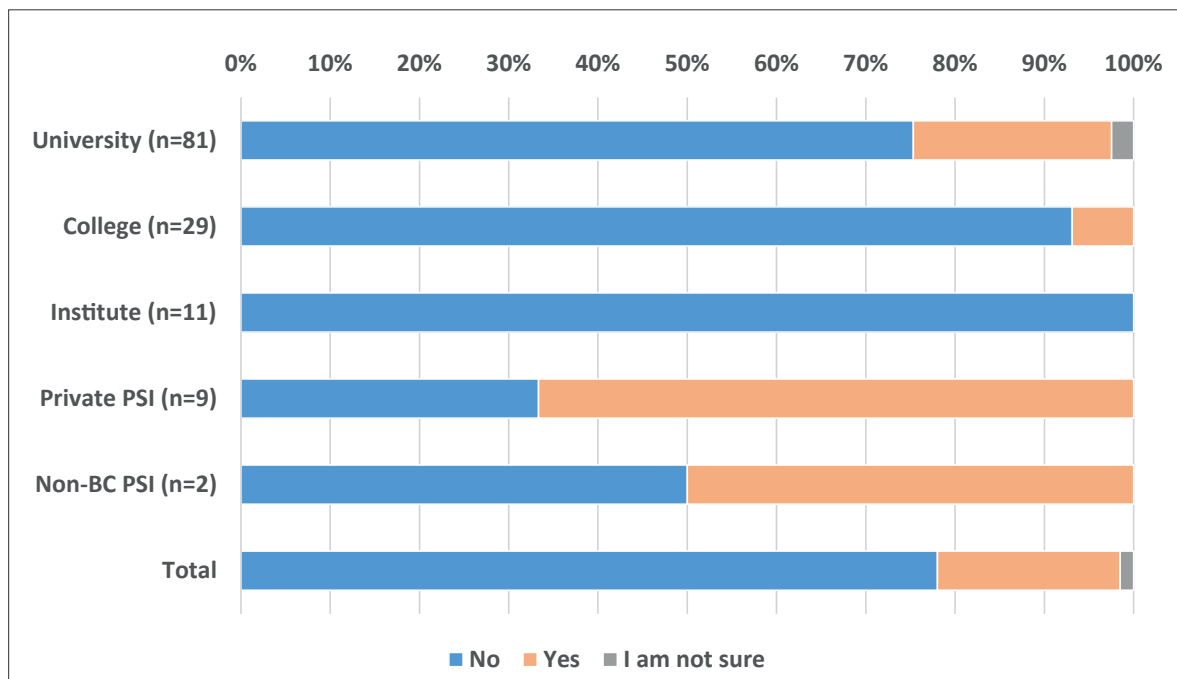


Figure 4. Percent of Advising Units with Student Peer Advisors by Institution Type



that technology was used effectively at their institutions, although 29% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The largest percentage of respondents who disagreed that technology was used effectively came from institutes: seven out of 11 respondents (over 60%) shared that perception. While all respondents from institutes had specific opinions about the effective use of technology, a large percentage of respondents from other sectors was undecided (up to 20% of respondents in each of the other institution types). This, as well as respondents' comments on the use of technology in Table 4, may be indicative of respondents experiencing certain technological challenges connected with the changing demands of students as well as the increased demand for services.

About 90% of all respondents (115 out of 127 respondents) indicated that the demand for advising services had increased over the previous five to eight years. In some cases the increased demand represented an increase in scope of practice. For example, one survey respondent noted that, "Career advising is more and more a task of my job." Demand for advising was driven partly by advisors' participation in programs that serve different groups of students as well as other institutional activities. The analysis suggested that advising specifically for first-year

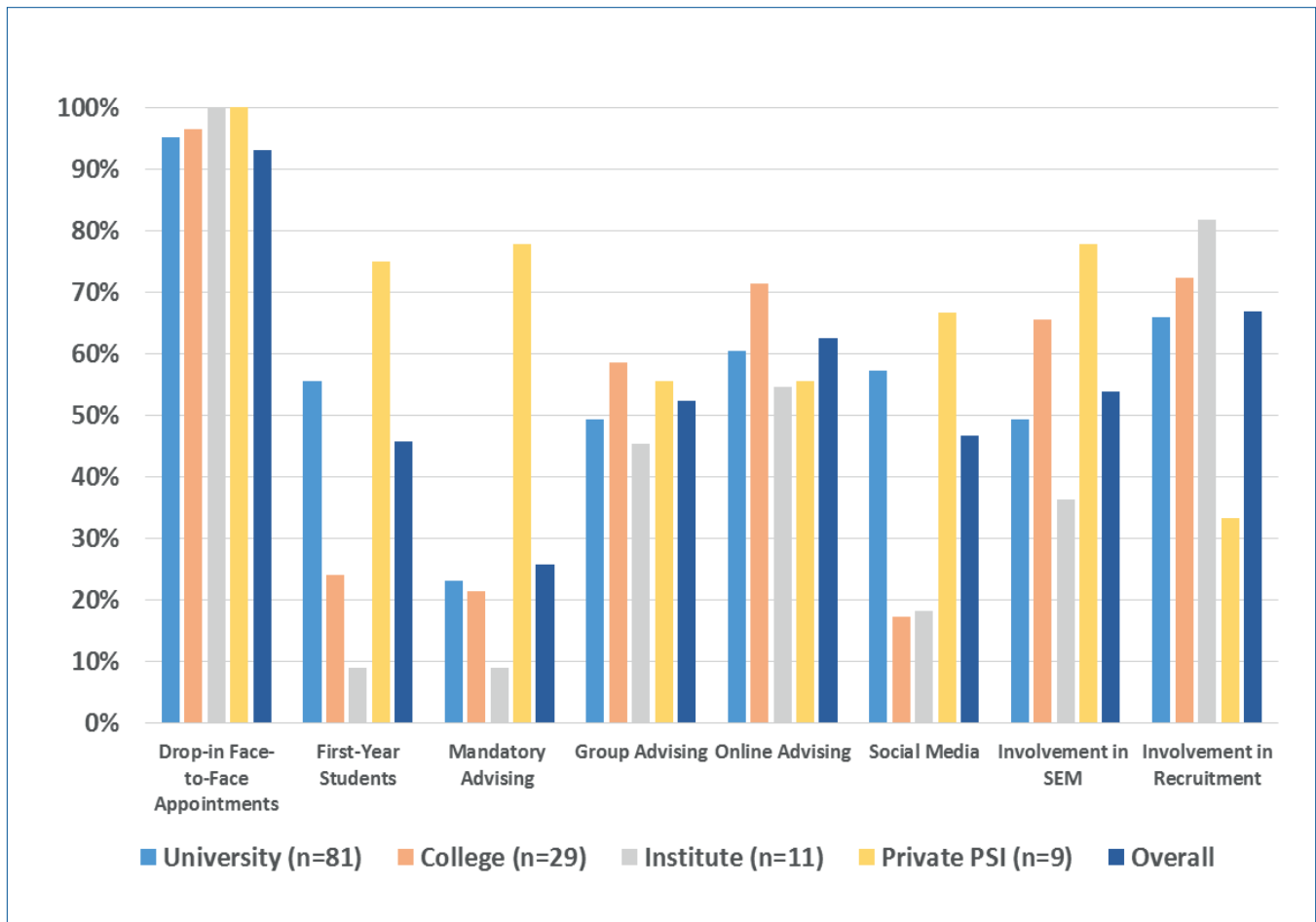
students and mandatory advising were much more common at private institutions (Figure 5). Private institutions had the largest percentage of advising using of social media (67% of private PSI respondents), followed by universities (57%), while at colleges and institutes this mode of advising was not prevalent. Respondents from private PSIs were more likely to be involved in strategic enrolment planning than in recruitment; this was the opposite for other PSI types. Respondents from colleges, however, were more likely to participate in group advising (59%) and online advising (71%) than the respondents from the other institution types (Figure 5).

These data suggest that academic advisors in BC are attempting to meet some of the needs of diverse student populations by implementing a range of special programs. The growing demand for increased service, the complexity of meeting the needs of diverse student populations, and the ever-evolving application of technology can be important drivers for keeping a trained team of advisors. On the other hand, only 62% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their professional development as advisors was well-supported by their institutions and kept them current on best practices in academic advising.

Table 4. **Advisor Comments about Challenges with Technology**

Advisors are not keeping pace with using technology
Effective student communications in an increasingly complex technology environment
Effective use of technology to reach as many students as possible
Students are wanting information faster and with less detail
Transition to everyone living on their phone
Making advising more accessible using technology
Connecting with students online in a way that has impact & purpose
Everything is moving online and students expect instantaneous responses. It is hard to keep up with their demands with the resources that we have.
Technological changes to university practices and platforms that tend to confuse students more than help them
Learning new computer programs/updates to programs
Advisors not as up-to-speed with technology as the students. Keeping pace is hard with all the other demands in my work day
Understanding how using technology intersects with advising practices

Figure 5. **Percent of Respondents Answering “Yes” Regarding Advisor Participation in Special Program Activities**



**Notes:** Non-BC PSI data were not included due to the low sample size for this institution type.

**Mandatory Advising for Students** - of those that report having mandatory advising it was explicit that it was for at-risk first year students, students with disabilities, students with low GPAs, students in limited intake programs, students on academic probation, and ABE students.

**Online Advising** - the common online advising forms were email, responsive chat forums, Skype, Bluejeans Virtual Advising System, Blackboard, Instant messaging, and webinars. The most common format was email.

**Advising Using Social Media** - Facebook was the most common social media used. There was limited use of Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. LinkedIn had very limited use.

**Involvement in SEM** - i.e., Institutional strategic planning, education or program planning, enrollment planning, special programming/events.

**Student Recruitment** - e.g., high school visits, career fairs, open house presentations, parent information sessions.

## Focus Group Results

The three focus group sessions provided opportunities for students to comment on academic advising in a semi-structured format using a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix Three). The comments emphasized some elements of both the literature review undertaken in this report and the survey responses given, most notably in the area of use of technology. Given the low numbers of students and focus groups, the results should be interpreted as tentative, potentially indicating themes to explore.

Focus group participant feedback confirmed the survey results regarding advising hours and noted that advising work schedules appear to be set according to each institution's convenience and do not necessarily match a student's reality – especially if the student is attending class and also working. Students would appreciate more flexibility of access to advisors. The focus group students suggested caution in implementing mandatory advising for special groups of students. While they agreed that reaching out to students who are struggling can be helpful, students noted that requiring them to attend mandatory advising may single out and embarrass them, potentially causing students to withdraw instead of engage.

Students reported that certain programs, such as online and group advising, were extremely helpful. They appreciated drop-in advising and being able to communicate using email. There was an indication that students were aware of the various roles that advising could undertake. For example, students commented that if advisors had more time, they could provide greater assistance with helping students to select courses that better fit their learning styles and career options. Students suggested that advisors could provide the ability for them to ask more questions online via live chat or email. Having responses to student questions in an email was considered more reliable by students than information received during an appointment. They liked to save the information and refer to it at a later date.

The role of technology in providing information was a topic of student comments. Focus group students reported using some form of degree audit software and reported they were very satisfied with their ability to track their own progress. Students using degree audit software, however, did point out the importance of being able to see an advisor to discuss milestones and key decision points. This was especially important to international students, as they reported having some challenges with receiving information online exclusively. Students also noted the mixture of institutional and non-institutional sources of information. For example, one student commented, "I prefer to do my course selection research online. This is an area I would love advice on, but for the moment Rate My Professor or friends is where I get advice." [University focus group student comment].

In the context of social media, students wondered why advisors did not recommend LinkedIn as a career development tool. Twitter and Instagram were also more popular with students than Facebook. Students suggested that Facebook was most likely the only social media platform that advisors knew how to use because it is commonly used by people of the students' parents' age.

Students in the focus groups suggested that the area of advising most in need of improvement was providing information and advice connecting education to workplace skills and occupations, especially through electronic resources related to career planning. Only a few students were aware of resources such as WorkBC or Blueprints for Student Success, although many reported significant use of Education Planner (EP) and the BC Transfer Guide (TG). Students from all types of institutions reported that they often went to EP before they went to see an advisor – especially at the start of their program – and that they used both EP and TG to verify information after advising appointments.

# Future Directions and Research

The results of this study suggest some areas for further exploration.

**Definition and Roles:** There seems to be confusion regarding the roles of advising and counselling in supporting the student's progression through higher education. Institutions may wish to review definitions of advising, goals, structures, and approaches, with the aim of ensuring institutional consistency and clarity.

A challenge is the definition of academic advising and handing-off of students—advising has not properly recognized the issue surrounding what academic advising really is and this is the root problem of the many unspoken issues regarding academic advising. The lack of concern and consideration to the student's life outside of their class hours that influence their academic success—these are items to be addressed from the very beginning, but this has not been addressed by many of the advisors, and later becomes an issue when it is too late. [Survey comment]

**Professional Development:** Changes in student demographics and needs in higher education should be matched by professional development for advisors, especially in the absence of a provincial professional organization. One survey respondent noted that “there is recognition and that is the first step, but there is little action towards training us to deal with unique groups and there is little action towards creating responsive programs.” [Survey comment]. A list of provincial or institutional professional development opportunities or a guide to appropriate resources, including online resources, might be useful institutional resources. Institutions may wish to offer advisors specific training in working effectively with specific groups of students, including Aboriginal, international, or other non-traditional student groups. In addition, since the Canadian literature on advising is limited, it may be beneficial for BC academic,

professional, or faculty advisors, as well as student development specialists, to engage in publishing and presenting their work in the Canadian context.

**Evidence-based decision making:** Survey respondents noted a number of areas where better information sharing could inform advising: one potential resource is the CAS Standards currently in use in the US and some Canadian institutions. Advisors might also provide input into institutional Strategic Enrolment Management plans by providing information on student population characteristics. Advisors may also have insights regarding program and course development, based on their contact with students. Information on student success, whether as graduates or as transfer students, might be of significant use to advisors when providing career and program advice. In keeping with recommendations from the literature, institutions may wish to consider developing, articulating, and measuring learning outcomes related to advising.

**Technology Usage:** Students in the focus groups commented on the gap between their use and understanding of technology and that of institutional staff. Institutions may wish to review the currency of their online interaction with and support for students on a regular and short-cycle basis.

**Research:** Institutions may wish to review the survey responses in this report in the context of their institutional practices. Institutions also may wish to conduct more complete and comprehensive reviews of student opinions in their own institutional contexts.

# Conclusion

Academic advising is an integral part of post-secondary education. However, a review of the literature suggests that both advising and post-secondary education have been evolving over the past century and continue to do so. Advising personnel, structures, and delivery models have been influenced by student development and learning theories and more recently by changes in student demographics and the increasing use of technology. This has led to some confusion in the definition of academic advising and its role and to the implementation of a variety of academic advising models at the institutional level.

Data gathered in BC suggests that there are challenges facing advising in the province, but that these challenges are not unlike those facing advising in other provinces or in the US. Both the literature and the data suggest that there may not be one “best model” and thus BC Transfer System members might wish to be more explicit about how advising is offered in each institutional setting, especially on institutional websites and as it relates to Aboriginal students.

The survey of BC advisors suggested that advising is not a defined career path, and the training and professional development of advisors is not as well-defined as it might be. While the training of individual advisors is an institutional responsibility, there may be some benefit to the BC post-secondary system in exploring ways for those involved in advising to share information, network, exchange ideas, conduct research, collaborate, and offer training programs on a provincial level.

The evidence in this report, including data from the advising survey and from student focus groups, suggests that BC advising delivery models, web sites, and technology resources might be enhanced through more consideration of students’ work-life demands, use of technology, and need for career and personal planning information in addition to course and program information.

These recommendations for future consideration should be of interest to institutions wishing to maximize the effectiveness of their services to students as well as to the BC Transfer System.

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# Appendix 1:

## Surveyed Institutions

### COLLEGES

- Camosun College
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Langara College
- North Island College
- Northwest Community College
- Okanagan College
- Selkirk College
- Vancouver Community College

### UNIVERSITIES

- Capilano University
- Emily Carr University of Art & Design
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Royal Roads University
- Simon Fraser University
- Thompson Rivers University
- University of British Columbia
- University of the Fraser Valley
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of Victoria
- Vancouver Island University

### PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

- Acsenda School of Management
- Alexander College
- Art Institute of Vancouver
- Columbia College
- Coquitlam College
- Corpus Christi College
- Fairleigh Dickinson University
- Fraser International College
- Quest University
- Trinity Western University
- University Canada West

### INSTITUTES

- BC Institute of Technology
- Justice Institute of BC
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

### OUT OF PROVINCE INSTITUTIONS

- Athabasca University (Alberta)
- Yukon College (Yukon)

# Appendix 2:

## Advisor Survey Instrument

Note: The format of the survey was slightly different in the online environment

### Welcome Screen:

Thank you for your interest in sharing your experiences and perspectives on Academic Advising on your campus. We greatly appreciate your assistance with this project.

At BCCAT standing committee meetings, it was noted that student advising has changed over the past number of years and that practices may vary across institutions. The purpose of this research is to investigate advising practices, inform members of the BC Transfer System, recommend further research, and stimulate dialogue about Academic Advising.

The ethics of this research have been reviewed and approved by the University of the Fraser Valley, Human Research Ethics Board. Your participation is completely voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be associated with your responses. The identity of individual institutions will also be protected.

This 10 -15 minute survey enables you to provide feedback about your institution's advising system. The survey is answered by clicking on radio buttons and short answer text box responses. As you finish each page and proceed to the next, your data will be submitted for processing. You can back up and change your answers on the previous page by using the "Back" button on the screen. Please do not use the "Back" button in your browser.

You may skip questions or exit the survey at any time without penalty. Please complete the survey only once. Once the survey is completed and/or submitted your data will be processed. To ensure anonymity no identifiable data is collected. Therefore, withdrawing from the study once the survey is submitted is not possible.

Results of this survey will be published by BCCAT on their website [www.bccat.ca](http://www.bccat.ca) . In addition, results may be presented at conferences, as well as submitted for publication in peer reviewed academic journals or student service related trade publications (i.e. blogs or magazines).

**If you have any questions about the research project please contact:**

Dr. Linda M Pardy  
604.309.1861  
[Linda.pardy@ufv.ca](mailto:Linda.pardy@ufv.ca)  
Or [linda@pardygroup.com](mailto:linda@pardygroup.com)

**If you have any concerns about the research project please contact:**

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By clicking on "Next" at the bottom of the page, you consent to participate in the survey.

Next →

## Pre-questions

### P1. Please select the type of post-secondary institution at which you work.

- College (Public)
- University (Public)
- Institute (Public)
- Private Institute
- Out-of-Province Institute in the BC Transfer System

### P2. Are you a NACADA Member?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

*Page Break*

## Academic Advising: System Overview

### 1. Identify the nature of your current position for the year 2015.

- Advisor with no for-credit classroom teaching responsibilities.
- Advisor, but I have some for-credit classroom teaching responsibilities.
- Advisor, but more than half of my job includes for-credit classroom teaching.
- Administrator, responsible for advising services.

### 2. I report to:

- Academic (i.e. ProVost, Vice-Provost, Dean, Faculty Department Head)
- Student Services (i.e. Vice-President, Director, or Manager)
- Other [please specify ..... ]

### 3. I work:

- Full Time - Monday to Friday days
- Full Time - but work evenings and weekends as part of my weekly shift
- Part Time - Monday to Friday days
- Part Time - but work evenings and weekends as part of my weekly shift
- On call only

### 4. How many years have you been employed as an Academic Advisor?

- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16- 20 years
- 20+ years

### 5. Academic Advisors at my institution require the following credential ....

- A graduation level degree
- A bachelor's degree
- A two year diploma
- A certificate
- No specific post-secondary education

6. **How many employees (full-time and non-full-time staff or faculty, including student staff) provide Academic Advising services at your institution?**
- o 1-5
  - o 6-10
  - o 10-15
  - o More than 15
7. **Recognizing that the organizational structure of academic advising differs by institution, please identify the primary focus or model that best describes your current advising model.** *(Adapted from NACADA Descriptions)*
- o **Faculty-only Model:** each student is assigned a faculty member, usually in the student's major program of study, for all academic advising.
  - o **Satellite Model:** sometimes referred to as the multiversity model, this structure has separate advising offices that are maintained and controlled by the different academic subject units.
  - o **Self-contained Model:** all student advising takes place in a centralized office that frequently does not have any direct interaction with faculty. Usually the office is staffed by professional academic advisors and overseen by a dean or administrative director – most of students.
  - o **Shared-supplementary Model:** faculty members provide academic advising, but are assisted by professionals in a supplementary office. Often this office provides coordination and training for faculty, as well as additional services such as transcript evaluation and graduation clearance.
  - o **Shared-split Model:** This model is similar to the shared-supplementary model, except that students are grouped for advising according to some measure of their academic progress. For example, student may go to an advising centre until they complete general education requirements and then they transition to a faculty member.
  - o **Shared-dual Model:** students are assigned two advisors. Commonly one of those advisors is a faculty member and the other is a professional staff member. The faculty help with curriculum and major sequence issues, and the professional staff member helps with registration issues and general progress.
  - o **Total intake Model:** students enter as a cohort and an advising centre provides the initial advising help. At the point where students have completed their first year, earned a certain number of credits or met some other pre-set criterion, students are released to faculty or professional advisors for advising.
  - o **Other:** at my institution we customized a model to fit the needs of our students and faculty.

**8. Please rank the top 8 areas where you provide advising services/support.**

*[1 being your highest focus and 8 being a lesser focus]*

	Aboriginal student services
	Academic advising – perspective students only
	Academic advising – for first year students only
	Academic Advising – for students admitted to specific programs only
	Academic Advising- for graduate level students only
	Academic Advising- for all undergraduate level students across the institution
	Accessibility/Disability services
	Administrative and Leadership for Academic Advisors
	Admissions and Recruitment
	Athletics & Recreation
	Assessment and evaluation (Transcripts)
	Career services
	Co-op, internship or other work-integrated learning
	Counselling & Psychological services
	Equity programs (such as LGBTQ, women’s centre)
	Financial aid/Awards
	First-generation student services
	Graduate student services
	Health services
	Higher Education/Student Services administration - Senior Student Affairs and Services Officer’s (VP, AVP) office
	Housing and Residence Life
	Learning strategies and support services (including writing centre, math centre, etc.)
	International student services, including study abroad
	Leadership development programs
	Orientation/Transition and First Year Experience programs
	Registrarial services
	Religious and spiritual programs
	Service-learning and civic/community engagement programs
	Student government/organization advising
	Student conduct/Judicial affairs
	Students at risk of academic success
	Technology, including advising portal development and maintenance
	Town-gown relations
	Wellness programs and services

**9. Does your position require you to participate in formal student recruitment initiatives? (i.e. high school visits, career fairs, Open House presentations)**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**10. Does your advising unit have student peer advisors?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**11. What is the length of an average face-to-face advising appointment at your institution?**

- 15 - 20 min
- 21 - 30 min
- 31 – 40 min
- 41 min or longer

**12. Does your institution have drop in face-to-face appointments?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**13. Does your institution have specific advising services for first year students?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**14. Does your institution have mandatory advising for students?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**14a. If YES please indicate who would receive mandatory advising [ .....**

**15. Does your institution offer group advising?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**16. Does your institution offer online advising?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**17. Does your advising services use social media?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**18. How many advisors or advising units would a student access at your institution?**

- One, the student comes to one place for all their advising needs
- Two, the student starts at open, central, or first year advising and then transitions to program/faculty level advising
- Three, the student starts with pre-admission advising, moves to first year advising, and then transitions to program/faculty level advising
- I am not sure

**19. How many students do you support on average a year?**

- Less than 150 students per year
- 150 – 250 students per year
- 251 - 400 students per year
- 401 – 600 students per year
- More than 600 students per year
- I do not track student numbers



**20. How much time do you dedicate in a year to hosting and planning orientations about programs and services at your institution? (Including departmental/unit and institution-wide)**

- We do not have orientations.
- We have orientations but I am not involved.
- Less than 20 hours/year
- 21- 40 hours/year
- 41 -60 hours/year
- More than 60 hours/year

### **Academic Advising: Institutional Overview**

**21. Does Academic Advising at your institution evaluate itself using the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for Academic Advising?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**22. Has Academic Advising at your institution had a formal program/service review in the past 5-8 years?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**23. Are all advisors at your institution members of NACADA?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**24. Does your institution have a formal Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan?**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**25. Are representatives from your Academic Advising unit actively involved in institutional level strategic planning initiatives? (i.e. Institutional strategic planning, education or program planning, enrolment planning, special programming/events)**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

**26. Does your Academic Advising unit have expressed learning outcomes (i.e. learning outcomes that students and faculty would be aware of.)**

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

## Academic Advising: Assessment

- 27. Academic Advising at my institution has experienced an increase in demand for services over the past 5-8 years.**
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
- 28. Students can easily locate and communicate with an advisor at my institution.**
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
- 29. Academic Advising at my institution uses technology effectively (i.e. online note taking, appointment bookings, caseload management, learning management systems).**
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
- 30. Academic Advising at my institution is seen by the institution as having an instructional role in student development.**
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
- 31. Leadership at my institution recognizes that Academic Advising serves a growing diverse student population.**
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
- 32. Leadership at my institution has been responsive in supporting the work of Academic Advising.**
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Undecided
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

**33. My professional development, as an advisor, is well supported by my institution and has enabled me to remain current on best practices in academic advising.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**34. Academic Advising at my institution is doing an excellent job of meeting the needs of students.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### **Academic Advising: Final Feedback**

**35. Over the past five years I have found the greatest 3 challenges facing Academic Advising are .....**

*[ Text Box with numbers 1. 2. 3.]*

**36. Please finish the following statement. For Academic Advising to adapt to change and meet the needs of today's students I would appreciate having research and/or data on the following .....**

*[Text Box]*

**37. If there is anything else you would care to share with the research team regarding your institution's or your personal efforts to support student success, please use the space below.**

*[3,000 character text box appears]*

### **End of Survey**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses will inform provincial and institutional efforts in understanding and supporting the work of Academic Advising. The results of this research will be available on the BCCAT website [www.bccat.ca](http://www.bccat.ca)

# Appendix 3:

## Focus Group Protocol & Guide Questions

### Interview Between: Students at ##Institution## and Dr. Linda Pardy Introductory Remarks – To Participants

Thank you for assisting me with a research study involving academic advising services at your institution. The research model being used for this study is a qualitative mix-methods approach through which I am seeking input, feedback, and evaluation of your use and experience with academic advising. In this way I hope to illuminate and answer questions about how the post-secondary education system ought to update or support the engagement of students with academic advising services.

The following guiding questions are designed to serve as a launching place for our discussion during this session. You are not required at any time to answer any question that you do not feel is helpful or relevant to your experience or this research. You can select a pseudonym that will be used as your descriptor for this study and to protect your identity.

### Process

The focus group will begin with introductions and participants will be asked to provide a brief background about themselves. Guide questions: 1) What program are you in? 2) When do you plan to complete your studies? 3) What are some of your goals in attending post-secondary? Participants will be provided an opportunity to respond by recording their input on note cards or by contributing to the discussion. Once introductions are complete a brief overview of what academic advising is will be provided.

#### **Guide Questions**

- 1) When did you start planning to your post-secondary education?
- 2) Who helped you with planning your post-secondary education? Can you describe/evaluate your planning process?
- 3) Did you know from the start what you wanted to take? Tell me a bit about that....
- 4) When did you or would you go to an advisor? (before starting, during, near end, other?)
- 5) How often do you envision needing advising? Describe your experience with access to advisors....
- 6) What options do you have if you were to change your area of study? Do you think you have enough information to make an informed decision about options? Describe ...
- 7) How would you like to interact with an advisor? (face-to-face; online; other). Why and what are the benefits....
- 8) What resources do you use to get program/course planning information? (advising appointments, friends, Facebook, Education Planner.ca, parents etc) Why and what are the benefits....
- 9) What would be the most valuable type of advice you could get from academic advising?

Overview “Big Picture” Question

- 1) What do or did you learn from Academic Advising?

### Project Close

The session will conclude with a warm thank you and appreciation for their contributions. I will remind each participant that their contribution has the ability to help other students in the future and to improve academic advising across many campuses in BC.

# Acknowledgements

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