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National Survey of Student Engagement 2013; President's Questionnaire for New Students 2012-13

Perceptions of First-Year Academic Advising More Positive Than Perceptions of Academic Advising of Seniors in Their Majors

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Research

Report number 13-03

December, 2013

Good academic advising is crucial to college students. An academic advisor can, for example, help students navigate often complicated policies and requirements; provide referrals to academic support resources; listen to students' concerns; and aid in the selection of classes that will best serve the students' goals and minimize the amount of time students must spend on earning a degree. Under Loyola's mixed model of academic advising, most Loyola students will work with at least two or three academic advisors while here. For the first two years they work with an Academic Advisor¹ in the Office of First and Second Year Advising (preferably the same Advisor they worked with during Orientation and, typically, the one teaching their University 101 course). Beginning in their junior year, students transition to an Academic Advisor in the Dean's office of the College or Schools in which they are pursuing a degree. In addition, many departments formally assign students declaring a major to a faculty advisor. Thus, it is quite possible that a student double-majoring in two different schools (for example, in Psychology and Social Work) would have five academic advisors while at Loyola.

Although each of these Academic Advisors may be responsible for guiding students on separate, specific aspects of their education, all have the same goal: supporting students in achieving an excellent Loyola education. Most students are keenly aware of the key role an academic advisor should play in their academic experience, and are often harsh critics if their advisors do not provide them with the kinds and amount of advising they feel they need.

Because of how important academic advising is, many surveys of undergraduate students include questions on satisfaction with the academic advising experience. This report covers data on students' perceptions of academic advising from two surveys, Loyola's internal President's Questionnaire for New Students (PQNS, administered to new students about two weeks into fall semester) and the externally administrated National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, administered in spring semester to freshmen and seniors).

Key findings

Perceptions of academic advising among new freshmen and transfer students

- The 2012-13 results of the President's Questionnaire for New Students (PQNS) indicate that, two weeks into their first semester, new students were on average

¹ In this report, unless otherwise stated the term "Academic Advisor" when capitalized refers to a formally assigned academic advisor.

satisfied across several measures of their academic advising experience, especially in feeling like their advisors cared about their academic success. Most, if not all, of their academic advising experience so far would have been during Orientation over the summer.

- There were no meaningful differences between new freshman and new transfer average perceptions of the academic advising they had received so far (see Table 1). This is especially interesting in light of other PQNS results that show lower levels of academic adjustment among transfer students than among new freshmen.

Quality of freshman and senior interactions with Academic Advisors

- Beginning in 2013, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) included a question on the quality of students' interactions with Academic Advisors (informal or formally assigned Academic Advising staff or formally assigned faculty).

Freshmen

- Average Loyola freshman ratings of the quality of their interactions with their Academic Advisor were similar to the ratings by their counterparts at close peer institutions, other Jesuit institutions, and other institutions in the same Carnegie class as Loyola (see Table 2; see Appendix A for lists of institutions in comparison groups).

Seniors

- Loyola seniors, however, rated the quality of their interactions with Academic Advisors less positively than did seniors at close peer institutions and same Carnegie class institutions.

Freshman and senior contact with and perceptions of support from Academic Advisors

- Also beginning in 2013, NSSE offered sets of optional question modules on various topics, which institutions can append to the main survey for their students. Loyola adopted the Academic Advising module, to obtain more detailed data on student perceptions of academic advising than are collected through other surveys. The comparison group for the Academic Advising module results includes a wide variety of 47 institutions that administered the module. All questions refer to the current school year.

Freshmen

- Loyola freshmen and freshmen at the Academic Advising module comparison institutions reported

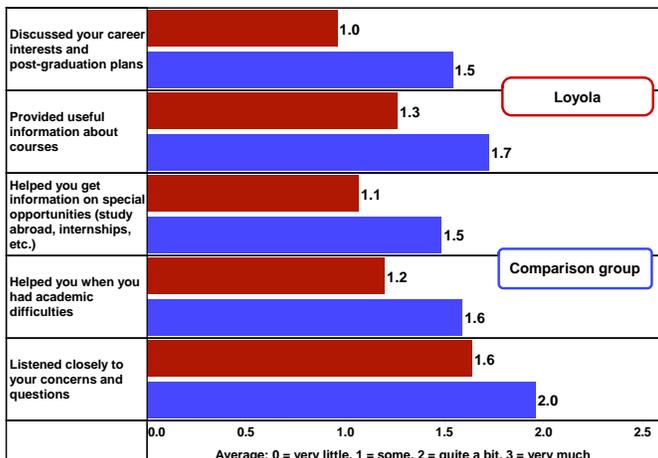
seeking help from their formally assigned Academic Advisor at about the same average frequency (2.5 times vs. 2.3 times, respectively; see Table 3).

- Likewise, average Loyola freshman perceptions of support from their Academic Advisor were very similar to those of freshmen at the comparison institutions.
- The only exception was that Loyola Academic Advisors more frequently informed freshmen of academic support options, relative to their comparison group peers.
- Loyola freshmen reported quite a bit of support from their Academic Advisor in listening to concerns and questions, notification of deadlines, being available when needed, and referral to academic support. They reported the least support in provision of information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.) and discussion of career interests and goals, but these are areas that are not very relevant to freshmen.

Seniors

- Loyola seniors sought help from their formally assigned Academic Advisors less frequently, on average, than their comparison group counterparts (1.9 times vs. 2.4 times).
- Loyola seniors reported less support from formal Academic Advisors in multiple areas, compared to seniors at other institutions that administered the Academic Advising module. These areas included discussion of career interests and post-graduation plans; provision of useful information about courses; help finding information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.); help in the face of academic difficulties; and listening closely to concerns and questions.

Figure 1: Seniors' perceived support from Formal Academic Advisors during current school year



Actual primary sources of academic advising and perceptions of Academic Advisors among freshmen and seniors

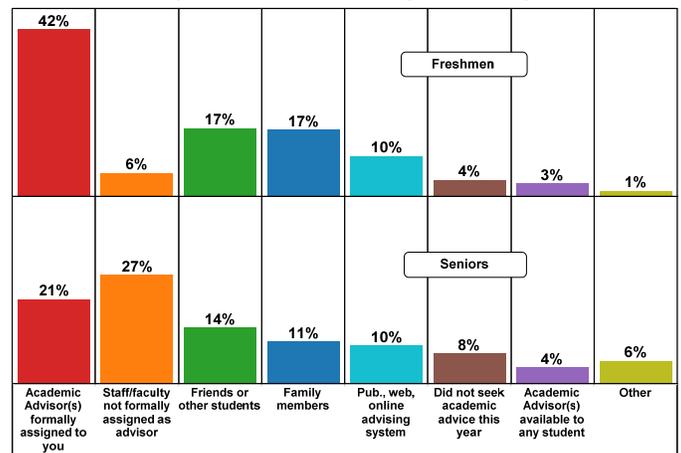
- One question in the Academic Advising model asks students to report who or what was their **actual**

primary source of advising on academic plans during the current school year, whether or not that was a formally assigned staff or faculty Academic Advisor. Results suggest that the majority of students' **actual** primary source was not a formal Academic Advisor. Not surprisingly, patterns of student perceptions of support from their Academic Advisor differed according to their primary source of advice on academic plans.

Freshmen

- Forty two percent of Loyola freshmen did use their assigned Academic Advisor as their primary source of advice on academic plans, and another 3% used an Academic Advisor not assigned directly to them (see Table 4).

Figure 2: Actual primary source of advising on academic plans for Loyola freshmen and seniors during current school year



- One third, however, drew on friends/other students or on family members as their primary source of advice.
- On most measures freshmen reported greater support from an Academic Advisor if their primary advice on academic plans came from a formal Academic Advisor, rather than informally from a staff/faculty member (see Table 5). The exception was listening closely to concerns and questions, where there was little difference according to whether the student's primary source was a formal Academic Advisor or an informal staff/faculty advisor. This may indicate that one of the reasons freshmen went to non-advisor staff/faculty members was for an informal empathetic ear.
- Freshmen who said that their actual primary source of advice on academic plans was a formal Academic Advisor perceived somewhat more Academic Advisor support, on average, than did other freshmen.

Seniors

- Only a quarter of Loyola seniors said that formal Academic Advisors (staff or faculty) were their actual primary source of advice on academic plans (see Table 4). Just over a quarter of seniors reported informal staff/faculty advisors as their primary source,

and another quarter reported other students/friends or family as their primary source.

- Seniors whose primary source of advice was a formal Academic Advisor(s) perceived substantially more Academic Advisor support, on average, than did those with other or no primary source of advice (see Table 5).

Conclusions

- Soon after starting their first semester, new freshmen and new transfer students in 2012 and 2013 were, on average, satisfied with the academic advising they had received so far (presumably most of which took place during Orientation), and felt like their advisors cared about their academic success.
- NSSE results indicated that the frequency of contact between Loyola freshman and their Academic Advisor, as well as the quality of those interactions, were similar to those of freshmen at comparison group institutions. Seniors at Loyola, however, reported fewer contacts and lower quality interactions with their Academic Advisors than did their peers at other institutions.
- Likewise, relative to their peers at comparison group institutions, Loyola freshmen reported similar levels of support from their Academic Advisors, while Loyola seniors reported lower levels of support on most of the measures used.
- Many respondents, especially seniors, said that during the current school year their primary source of advice on their academic plans was someone (or something) other than a formally assigned advisor or even an informal staff/faculty advisor. (Students are not asked for any detail about any additional advising sources they may actually have been using.)

- Not surprisingly, student perceptions of their formal Academic Advisor varied by who or what was their actual primary source of academic advice. It is reasonable to hypothesize that students' perceptions of support from Academic Advisors are directly related to their primary source of academic advice.
- The causal direction of that relationship is less clear. It may be that going somewhere other than to an Academic Advisor for advice leads to students feeling less supported by Advisors because there is less opportunity to get that support. It is also possible that not feeling supported by their Academic Advisors leads students to go elsewhere for advice. The latter seems, *prima facie*, more likely. But even if one effect is stronger than the other, the processes may operate simultaneously, creating a mutually reinforcing, circular pattern of perceptions and behavior.
- NSSE data make it difficult, at best, to tease out such causal relationships, because the data are not longitudinal (nor are there longitudinal data available from other relevant surveys). Another problem is that there may be too few students in some groups or categories to allow meaningful analyses. Loyola plans to administer the NSSE Academic Advising module again in 2014 and, although that will not solve these methodological problems, it will provide additional data points.
- So we are left with the question of why Loyola seniors are less satisfied with academic advising, relative both to their senior counterparts at comparison group institutions and to Loyola freshmen. Answering this question will require more than survey data, but the present report has documented this as an issue and established a baseline from which to go forward.

Table 1		
Satisfaction with Support by Academic Advisors of Incoming Freshmen and New Transfer Students (<i>averages</i>): President's Questionnaire for New Students, 2012-13		
<i>Average on scale 0 = very dissatisfied to 3 = very satisfied*</i>	2012	2013
	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>
All new students		
Academic advisor helpful in selecting classes	2.24	2.23
Academic advisor has provided other information/advice	2.10	2.05
Advisor cares about my academic success	2.32	2.32
New freshmen		
Academic advisor helpful in selecting classes	2.24	2.22
Academic advisor has provided other information/advice	2.12	2.04
Advisor cares about my academic success	2.34	2.32
New transfers		
Academic advisor helpful in selecting classes	2.23	2.27
Academic advisor has provided other information/advice	2.02	2.08
Advisor cares about my academic success	2.24	2.29

Source: President's Questionnaire for New Students, 2012-13

Table 2				
Perceived Quality of Freshman and Senior Interactions with Academic Advisors during Current School Year: Loyola and Comparison Groups, National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013				
<i>Average on scale 0 = poor to 5 = excellent</i>	Comparison group			
	Loyola	Close peers	Other Jesuit	Carnegie class
	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>
Freshmen	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.0
Seniors	3.4	4.0	3.8	4.0

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013 (weighted)

Table 3 Freshman and Senior Frequency of Contact with and Perceived Support from Academic Advisors during Current School Year: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013		
	Loyola	Comparison group
Freshmen		
Average number of times sought help from formal Academic Advisor	2.5	2.3
Perceived support from formal Academic Advisor		
<i>Average on scale 0 = very little to 3 = very much*</i>		
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	2.0	2.0
Informed you of important deadlines	2.0	1.8
Been available when needed	2.0	2.0
Informed you of academic support options	2.0	1.7
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	1.9	1.8
Provided useful information about courses	1.8	1.9
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	1.6	1.6
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.)	1.6	1.5
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	1.4	1.5
Seniors		
Average number of times sought help from formal Academic Advisor	1.9	2.4
Perceived support from formal Academic Advisor		
<i>Average on scale 0 = very little to 3 = very much*</i>		
Informed you of important deadlines	1.7	1.7
Been available when needed	1.7	2.0
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	1.6	2.0
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	1.4	1.6
Provided useful information about courses	1.3	1.7
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	1.2	1.6
Informed you of academic support options	1.1	1.4
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.)	1.1	1.5
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	1.0	1.5

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement 2013, supplementary Academic Advising module (weighted)

Table 4		
Freshman and Senior Primary Source of Advice on Academic Plans during Current School Year: National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013		
<i>% primary source of advising on academic plans (current school year)</i>	Loyola	Other Academic Advising module institutions
	%	%
Freshmen		
Academic Advisor(s) formally assigned to you*	42	36
Academic Advisor(s) available to any student	3	8
Faculty or staff not formally assigned as an advisor	6	9
Online advising system (degree progress report, etc.)	4	2
Web site, catalog, or other published sources	6	4
Friends or other students	17	15
Family members	17	18
Other	1	3
I did not seek academic advice this year	4	4
Seniors		
Academic Advisor(s) formally assigned to you*	21	36
Academic Advisor(s) available to any student	4	7
Faculty or staff not formally assigned as an advisor	27	20
Online advising system (degree progress report, etc.)	5	5
Web site, catalog, or other published sources	4	5
Friends or other students	14	11
Family members	11	8
Other	6	3
I did not seek academic advice this year	8	5

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement 2013, supplementary Academic Advising module (weighted)

Table 5
Perceived Support of Loyola Freshmen and Seniors by Primary Sources of Advice on Academic Plans:
National Survey of Student Engagement, 2013

Average perceived support from Academic Advisor on scale 0 = very little to 3 = very much, by primary source of advice on academic plans	Primary source of advice on academic plans			
	Academic Advisor	Informal		
		staff/faculty advisor	Other	None
	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.	Avg.
Freshmen				
Perceived support from formal Academic Advisor				
Been available when needed	2.18	1.93	1.59	1.71
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	2.28	2.36	1.64	1.86
Informed you of important deadlines	2.22	2.13	1.58	1.86
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	2.20	1.93	1.59	1.71
Informed you of academic support options	2.20	1.80	1.69	1.63
Provided useful information about courses	2.11	1.93	1.41	1.71
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	1.91	1.67	1.26	1.71
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.)	1.93	1.43	1.24	1.71
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	1.72	1.27	1.10	1.50
Seniors				
Perceived support from formal Academic Advisor				
Been available when needed	2.22	1.46	1.57	1.69
Listened closely to your concerns and questions	2.19	1.42	1.52	1.36
Informed you of important deadlines	2.15	1.49	1.61	1.68
Helped you understand academic rules and policies	2.10	1.23	1.14	1.47
Informed you of academic support options	1.84	.87	.91	1.53
Provided useful information about courses	1.96	.90	1.04	1.31
Helped you when you had academic difficulties	1.93	1.03	.94	1.10
Helped you get information on special opportunities (study abroad, internships, etc.)	1.65	.82	.97	.93
Discussed your career interests and post-graduation plans	1.59	.79	.83	.62

Source: National Survey of Student Engagement 2013, supplementary Academic Advising module (weighted)

Appendix A
Institutions in NSSE 2013 comparison groups

Institutions (locations) in NSSE Close Peers comparison group (N=6)

Catholic University of America, The (Washington, DC)	Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI)
DePaul University (Chicago, IL)	Saint Louis University (Saint Louis, MO)
Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago, IL)	Tulane University of Louisiana (New Orleans, LA)

Institutions (locations) in NSSE Jesuit institution comparison group (N=7)

Boston College (Chestnut Hill, MA)	Saint Louis University (Saint Louis, MO)
Gonzaga University (Spokane, WA)	Seattle University (Seattle, WA)
Loyola University New Orleans (New Orleans, LA)	Spring Hill College (Mobile, AL)
Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI)	

Institutions (locations) in NSSE Carnegie class RU/H comparison group (N=48)

Auburn University (Auburn University, AL)	University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL)
Baylor University (Waco, TX)	University of Alaska Fairbanks (Fairbanks, AK)
Boston College (Chestnut Hill, MA)	University of Colorado Denver (Denver, CO)
Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, OH)	University of Dayton (Dayton, OH)
Brigham Young University (Provo, UT)	University of Maryland, Baltimore County (Baltimore, MD)
Catholic University of America, The (Washington, DC)	University of Massachusetts Lowell (Lowell, MA)
Clarkson University (Potsdam, NY)	University of Mississippi (University, MS)
Clemson University (Clemson, SC)	University of Missouri-St. Louis (Saint Louis, MO)
College of William & Mary (Williamsburg, VA)	University of Montana (Missoula, MT)
Colorado School of Mines (Golden, CO)	University of Nevada, Reno (Reno, NV)
Florida Atlantic University (Boca Raton, FL)	University of New Hampshire (Durham, NH)
Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago, IL)	University of North Dakota (Grand Forks, ND)
Kansas State University (Manhattan, KS)	University of North Texas (Denton, TX)
Miami University-Oxford (Oxford, OH)	University of Rhode Island (Kingston, RI)
Missouri University of Science & Technology (Rolla, MO)	University of South Alabama (Mobile, AL)
Northeastern University (Boston, MA)	University of Texas at Arlington, The (Arlington, TX)
Polytechnic Institute of New York University (Brooklyn, NY)	University of Texas at Dallas, The (Richardson, TX)
Portland State University (Portland, OR)	University of Texas at El Paso, The (El Paso, TX)
Saint Louis University (Saint Louis, MO)	University of Texas at San Antonio, The (San Antonio, TX)
Southern Illinois University Carbondale (Carbondale, IL)	University of Toledo (Toledo, OH)
Stevens Institute of Technology (Hoboken, NJ)	West Virginia University (Morgantown, WV)
Temple University (Philadelphia, PA)	Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo, MI)
Texas Tech University (Lubbock, TX)	Wichita State University (Wichita, KS)
University of Akron (Akron, OH)	Wright State University (Dayton, OH)

continued...

Appendix A, continued
Institutions in NSSE 2013 comparison groups

Institutions (locations) in NSSE Academic Advising module comparison group (N=47)

Adelphi University (Garden City, NY)	Missouri University of Science & Technology (Rolla, MO)
Baylor University (Waco, TX)	New School, The (New York, NY)
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania (Bloomsburg, PA)	North Dakota State University (Fargo, ND)
Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, OH)	Rochester Institute of Technology (Rochester, NY)
California University of Pennsylvania (California, PA)	Rowan University (Glassboro, NJ)
Clarion University of Pennsylvania (Clarion, PA)	Saint Leo University (Saint Leo, FL)
Coastal Carolina University (Conway, SC)	Seton Hall University (South Orange, NJ)
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania (East Stroudsburg, PA)	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania (Shippensburg, PA)
Eastern Illinois University (Charleston, IL)	Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania (Slippery Rock, PA)
Eastern Kentucky University (Richmond, KY)	Southern Illinois Univ Edwardsville (Edwardsville, IL)
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania (Edinboro, PA)	Tennessee State University (Nashville, TN)
Florida Institute of Technology (Melbourne, FL)	Texas Christian University (Fort Worth, TX)
Indiana State University (Terre Haute, IN)	Texas Tech University (Lubbock, TX)
Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Indiana, PA)	University of Alaska Fairbanks (Fairbanks, AK)
Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN)	University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR)
Ithaca College (Ithaca, NY)	University of Massachusetts Lowell (Lowell, MA)
Kansas State University (Manhattan, KS)	University of Northern Iowa (Cedar Falls, IA)
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania (Kutztown, PA)	University of Rhode Island (Kingston, RI)
Lock Haven University (Lock Haven, PA)	University of Southern Indiana (Evansville, IN)
Marist College (Poughkeepsie, NY)	University of Tennessee Martin, The (Martin, TN)
Marshall University (Huntington, WV)	University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (Whitewater, WI)
Michigan State University (East Lansing, MI)	West Chester University of Pennsylvania (West Chester, PA)
Millersville University of Pennsylvania (Millersville, PA)	West Virginia University (Morgantown, WV)
Minnesota State University-Mankato (Mankato, MN)	