

In an attempt to maintain “top level” student services with limited funding, we are strategizing various ways to address student needs.

One option that crossed our mind is **Group Advising** – holding ½ hour small group sessions where guidance is provided to assist with selection of classes and courses of study rather than tradition one-on-one counseling sessions.

If you have any experience with this practice or similar strategies, please share your thoughts, ideas and/or suggestions.

City Colleges of Chicago

Here at the City Colleges of Chicago we are exploring utilizing technology more to allow for us to access & advise more students. In addition to utilizing Blackboard we have begun using Elluminate this fall to allow for "group advising" and it allows students to sign on from home or wherever is most convenient for them!

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Elgin Community College

We call our short individual appointment during REQUIRED orientation, a “mini-academic plan” and then counselors visit every COL-101 section to advertise the importance of building a full Education Plan which takes place by individual appointment with a Counselor. Our expectation is that students follow up and make those appointments. Some COL-101 instructors use a completed Education Plan as an assignment for COL-101.

Group sessions are Informational: Health programs, Strategies for success, Stress Reduction, etc. I am VERY interested in this topic because I believe it may be possible to utilize group advising for transfer students who don't need developmental coursework and career students who are in cohort programs, but I am not aware of anyone who actually DOES this!

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Harper College Joan Kindel [jkindle@harpercollege.edu]

At Harper, we do offer information sessions in groups but group advising is reserved for specific groups of students. Here is a response from our director of advising: We have found that group advising is most effective for relatively homogeneous groups of students, during which information needed by all participants can be conveyed. To this end, we offer small and medium-sized groups (5-15 students) for new part-time students, new full-time students, students on academic probation and other at-risk students, students interested in nursing and other health career programs, and students planning to transfer with a business major. Most of these groups are immediately followed by individual

advising, but these sessions are typically very brief because the information applicable to all students has already been conveyed.

I would add that other than being somewhat more efficient, groups can also produce better advising and student success results because students benefit from answers to other students' questions, and from each other's accounts of how they solved a problem or used a success strategy (as with our probation students).

Joliet Junior College

JJC offers group information sessions for prospective nursing students, but advising still takes place individually. We do require all first-time full-time students to participate in an orientation program where we offer a group presentation and advising, but the advising is actually a very brief one-on-one meeting with a counselor (although students go to the session in a group). This is the first summer we've done it this way so we still need to evaluate its effectiveness. Finally, we offer groups for students on academic probation but these groups also provide more information than specific academic advising. My experience here and at other colleges is that groups tend to work well for information giving, but students often still want individual attention.

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Kankakee

Kankakee experimented with group advising this summer and our best results have been with career and technical programs. We've had group sessions with our health programs for some time and that's worked well.

Kaskaskia College

We too have been hurting in the advisement area due to lack of staffing. At my previous school we tried group advising and it was not successful overall but, some of the advisors did enjoy it and the majority of the students benefited as well. Let me know what you find out as I don't see us adding staff in a full time capacity at this point.

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Moraine Valley Community College

Like many other community colleges, we do provide first time full time orientation sessions that include group advising (between 60- 90 students per day for the first part of the general information session and then we break the students

into smaller, manageable number). For every 25 students (of course, this does not happen as smoothly as we would like it when a staff member calls in), we assign one academic advisor, one counselor, and 2 student aides during the smaller break out session.

We have been conducting group information sessions to prospective nursing students and this past spring, we also implemented group advising for part time students.

In addition, Moraine’s Advising Center has implemented “lab sessions” for students who meet the following criteria:

The lab is for students who need help in selecting general courses for the semester. The lab is designed for general advice and guidance in mapping out the students’ schedule. Students who are in need of transfer advice or need additional information about their program will need to sign in for an individual advising session.

Students will be able to join the session at every half hour.

Requirements:

- Students who have earned 30 credit hours or less and need assistance selecting courses
- Students who have earned over 30 hours and have worked out a schedule during their individual session (students sent to the lab by their advisor to learn how to pick a schedule online)
- Students who have completed the placement exam /waiver/has transcripts for waiver and are not required to attend orientation
- New part-time students that only need general course suggestions

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Oakton Joianne Smith [joismith@oakton.edu]

Oakton is also in this same place of needing more advising but not having the staffing resources that can help us meet all of our student needs. We do use group advising for the health care programs, much like Rock Valley, but at this point we have not done other group advising (yet).

Prairie State College Mary B. Reaves [mreaves@prairiestate.edu]

At Prairie State College, one of the practices we currently use is our Intentional Advising. Each counselor and advisor is assigned at least one section of our English 099 course. They are obligated to have no less than three contacts each semester with our students (e.g., one classroom visit and the remaining two, preferably face-to-face office visits). This method allows for the one-on-one contact essential for student connection and retention and ensures that the student registers for the appropriate courses. This method has been deemed one of the "best practices" in NACADA (National Association of Academic Advising) and is widely used across the country.

Rock Valley College Amy Diaz [A.Diaz@RockValleyCollege.edu]

We do this at RVC with a few different populations (e.g., pre-Nursing and pre-Dental Hygiene because the criteria for acceptance is so specific and the admission process so competitive). We refer to them as “Nursing(or Dental Hygiene) Information Sessions” and they are required as part of the application process. It is a great way to get specific information out to a large number of people at the same time. However, the issue is that each student then desires to make an individual appointment with an academic advisor to go over **their** specific issues, placement scores, academic plan, etc. This is not a bad thing – but it is the reality of what we’ve found at RVC.

Sandburg snorton@sandburg.edu

Sandburg started group advising for the health programs this year. We have had some problems, but it looks like it has been a successful transition. It did take pressure off of the advising staff. We have had the calmest week before the start of the semester that I can recall.

Shawnee Community College

We have information sessions for nursing students but advisement is done individually.

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Triton College

This is something that we do with our selective admission programs in allied health. They are called information sessions but group advising for course selection and academic planning is done at the session for all those in attendance. It works very well for those programs.

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Waubonsee Community College

At WCC we do individual advising with the exception of first-time full-time students. In the past we offered those students a group session where we explained the catalog and schedule and then allowed them to build their schedule with counselors and advisors roaming around helping. Each student had a lap top where they were sitting so they could register once they were satisfied with their schedule.

This year we tried something new that has been a hit with both our students and our staff. We have created an online interactive web-based program. Students may access this program as soon as they have completed a New Student Information Form and have been assigned an X number. Upon completion of the 7 modules (takes about one hour and ends in a full or partial registration) students are then given an opportunity to register for a New Student Orientation.

New Student Orientations are offered May - August (run about 3 hours). At NSO students experience presentations on (1) College Readiness/Expectations (2) how to use mywcc and some basic technology info (3) Diversity - Afterwards counselors and advisors are there to review schedules, complete schedules, and/or answer any questions that might arise.

This summer we have had fewer complaints about back logs of seeing people, our enrollments have been managed more effectively, staff have felt less stress, and we are finding better prepared students. We love it and once we have all survived August - we would be happy to share with anyone interested.

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