Pioneer Pathways: Analysis of Spring Academic Advisor Survey

Cal State East Bay, Summer 2021

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Introduction

In January 2020, the Stupski Foundation awarded two three-year implementation grants to San Francisco State University (SFSU) and California State University East Bay (Cal State East Bay) for the predictive analytics and proactive advising (PAPA) initiative. The objective of this strategy is to both build the capacity of the California State University (CSU) system to develop a predictive analytics and proactive advising backbone, and build the capacity of local CSUs to use predictive analytics and proactive advising in support of local priorities. Building on the CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025) and campuses' strategic planning efforts around their predictive analytics platform (EAB), the Foundation sought to partner with CSUs to further develop mindsets, technological capacity, advising infrastructure, and student supports through data-driven pilot investments. The grant award amounts were approximately $4 million over three years for each campus. Hatchuel Tabernik & Associates (HTA), a consulting firm based in Berkeley, was contracted by the Stupski Foundation in the spring of 2020 to conduct a developmental evaluation of the predictive analytics and proactive advising (PAPA) initiative at Cal State East Bay and SFSU. This report focuses on findings from a survey developed by Cal State East Bay and administered to staff in March-April 2021.

Survey sample

Survey administration period and method: The survey was sent March 16, 2021 – April 7, 2021 via email to the Academic Advisors listserv. The survey was hosted on the Qualtrics platform and advisors were invited to take part in the survey through an anonymous URL that was emailed to the listserv by Maureen Scharberg. Weekly reminders were sent by Maureen to the listserv that encouraged participation in the survey. **The survey was voluntary and did not have any forced-response questions (i.e., respondents did not have to answer any question they did not want to).**

Survey data was then analyzed by HTA using SPSS statistical software. This report includes overall findings from the advisor survey, as well as comparisons between faculty and non-faculty advisors, and by college division, years advising, and advisor race/ethnicity. Results by college division and advisor race/ethnicity are reported more broadly due to small sample sizes.

Population: All individuals classified as faculty or staff academic advisors at East Bay.

Response rate: There were 90 recorded responses of 355 individuals who received the survey. This represents a response rate of 25%. Note that while 355 individuals are subscribed to the advisors listserv, not everyone is classified as an academic advisor.

Incentives: None

Confidentiality: This survey was noted as anonymous to all potential respondents. No identifiable information (e.g., NetIDs, emails, etc.) was collected as part of this survey. The only demographic information that is available is self-identified information within first section of the survey responses.

Findings

Demographics of respondents

Table 1. Staff Respondents by Division/College	
Respondent	**Count**
Faculty Advisor	41
Other	14
Advisors from Freshmen and Sophomore Success Team (FASST)	9
Advisor from college-based advising center	9
An affinity advisor for an affinity group (e.g., Athletics, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), EXCEL program, intern)	9
Pioneer Success Coach advisor	6
An advisor from Academic Advising at Concord	1
Total	**90**

Table 2. College Division	
Respondent	**Count**
CSCI	26
CLASS	25
APS	17
Student Affairs	9
CBE	6
Not answered/missing	5
CEAS	2
Total	**90**

Table 3. Race/Ethnicity of Respondents	
Respondent	**Count**
White	45
Asian and/or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	18
Latinx	11
Not stated/not listed	8
Black	4
Multiracial	3
Missing	1
Total	**90**

Table 4. Years Advising	
Respondent	**Count**
7+ Years	47
4-6 Years	20
1-3 Years	16
Less than a year	7
Total	**90**

Topics Discussed with Advisees

- Overall, advisors most commonly reported discussing the following topics "Often" or "Very Often" with advisees: major requirements (90%); life and career goals (80%); add/drop (73%); course scheduling and registration (71%); GE requirements (69%); and transfer credit (68%).
- Advisors spent the least amount of time discussing withdrawing from East Bay (30%), co-curricular activities (25%), and campus employment (19%) with advisees.
- Among faculty, the most commonly discussed topics were major requirements (95%), life and career goals (92%), and transfer credit (75%). Among non-faculty, the most frequently discussed topics were major requirements (86%), GE requirements (86%), and overlay requirements (81%).
- Among those who had been advising for less than seven years, the most common topics of discussion with advisees were major requirements (84%), support for goals (81%), and GE requirements (73%). Staff who had been advising for seven or more years reported most frequently discussing major requirements (95%), scheduling and registration procedures (79%), and life and career goals (79%). However, there were no significant differences in discussion topics between those who had been advising less than seven years and those who had been advising for seven or more years.
- Compared to white advisors, BIPOC advisors reported more frequently discussing GE requirements, American Institutions (CODE) requirements, information on second English composition, basic needs, financial aid, technology issues, and personal issues with advisees.

Table 5. Topics Discussed with advisees						
	Overall		Faculty		Non-faculty	
Topics of Discussion	Total N	% Often and Very Often	Total N	% Often and Very Often	Total N	
Major requirements	80	90%	37	95%	43	86%
Life and career goals	79	80%	37	92%*	42	69%*
Dropping/adding/withdrawing from courses	80	73%	37	65%	43	79%
Scheduling/registration procedures	80	71%	37	62%*	43	79%*
GE requirements	80	69%	37	49%*	43	86%*
Transfer credit	79	68%	36	75%*	43	63%*
Academic difficulties/probation/disqualification	81	61%	37	43%*	44	75%*
Overlay requirements	79	60%	36	33%*	43	81%*
Study skills and habits	80	60%	37	62%	43	58%
Continuing education after graduation	80	58%	37	68%*	43	49%*
Tutoring resources	80	58%	37	49%	43	65%
Personal issues	80	55%	37	49%	43	61%
Adding a major or minor	80	54%	37	41%*	43	61%*
Basic needs	81	49%	37	41%	44	57%
Academic policies (e.g., Holds)	81	48%	37	27%*	44	66%*
Financial aid	80	48%	37	27%*	43	65%*
Internships	80	48%	37	49%*	43	47%*
Selecting/changing major area of study	81	47%	37	32%*	44	59%*
American Institutions (CODE) requirements	80	45%	37	11%*	43	74%*
Online/technology issues	80	43%	37	43%	43	42%
Information on second English composition	80	35%	37	8%*	43	58%*
Withdrawing or transferring from East Bay	81	30%	37	8%*	44	48%*
Co-curricular activities	80	25%	37	19%	43	30%
Employment on campus	80	19%	37	11%*	43	26%

Note: Total responses range from 79 to 81; percentages reported are valid percentages (missing values are excluded**). Significant differences at the 0.05 level** between faculty and non-faculty advisors were measured by T-Test, and significant differences are denoted with an asterisk. The five most commonly discussed topics overall, among faculty advisors, and among non-faculty advisors are highlighted.

Resources Used by Advisors

- The most frequently used advising resources by advisors were MyCSUEB (with an average score of 3.8), the online schedule of classes (3.7), the online catalog/roadmap (3.1), Bay Advisor (3.0), and departmental websites (3.0). MyCSUEB was used daily by 80% of respondents.
- Pioneer Insights (0.6), predictive analytics (0.7), and national data sources (0.8) were the least frequently used resources among advisors. Sixty-five percent (65%) of advisors have not used Pioneer Insights, 60% have not used predictive analytics, and 54% have not used national data sources.
- For most advising resources included in the survey, there was a significant difference between how frequently the resources were used by faculty advisors compared to non-faculty advisors *(see Table 6 below)*.
- There were a few significant differences in the resources used by those who had been advising for less than seven years and those who had been advising for over seven years:
    - Longtime advisors reported using Bay Advisor less frequently (2.71 versus 3.41)
    - More junior advisors reported less frequent use of OnBase (1.39 versus 2.19) and of the Pioneer Data Warehouse (1.08 versus 1.68)
- The analysis was also broken down by advisor race/ethnicity. Compared to white advisors, BIPOC advisors reported more frequent use of campus advising emails (with an average score of 2.90 compared to 2.21) and TES (Transfer Equivalence System (2.87 compared to 2.00).

Table 6. Resources Used by Advisors				
Please indicate how often you use the following resources to inform your advising of students… (Have not used=0, Once each term=1, Monthly=2, Weekly=3, Daily=4)	**Total N**	**Average Score**	**Faculty average score**	**Non-faculty average score**
MyCSUEB	80	3.8	3.61	3.93
Online schedule of classes	80	3.7	n/a	n/a
Online catalog/roadmap	80	3.1	2.69	3.43
Bay Advisor	78	3.0	2.46	3.51
Department website	79	3.0	n/a	n/a
Academic forms page on Registrar's website	78	2.7	2.17	3.10
College website	80	2.7	1.97	3.25
Campus advising emails	78	2.5	1.86	3.07
TES (Transfer Equivalency System)	78	2.4	3.18	3.16
Resources or staff within a College-based advising center	77	2.0	1.47	2.40
OnBase	78	1.8	n/a	n/a
Academic Advising and Career Education (AACE) Website	77	1.8	1.14	2.33
Pioneer Data Warehouse	77	1.4	n/a	n/a
A national data source	78	0.8	n/a	n/a
Predictive analytics	78	0.7	0.42	0.98
Pioneer Insights	77	0.6	0.97	0.40

Note: This question was scored based on how frequently advisors reported accessing each resource: Have not used=0, Once each term=1, Monthly=2, Weekly=3, Daily=4. Mean scores were reported. When **significant differences at the 0.05 level** were identified between faculty and non-faculty advisors using a T-test, average scores for both faculty and non-faculty were reported.

Allocation of Time Among Advisors

- On average, advisors reported the highest proportion of their time each week was spent on appointments with advisees (21%), followed by course instruction (19%) and responding to students (17%).
- Advisors spent the least amount of time on campus committee work (8.4%), Bay Advisor notes (6.4%), and graduation checks/questions (5.4%).
- Comparing faculty to non-faculty, there were significant differences between the two groups in average time spent per week on all but one task listed *(see Table 7 below)*.
- Comparing longtime advisors and more junior advisors, more junior advisors reported spending more time each week on appointments with advisees (26% compared to 17%), while longtime advisors reported spending more time each week on campus committee work (11% compared to 6%).
- BIPOC advisors reported spending more time each week than did white advisors on responding to students (21% versus 13%), Bay Advisor notes (7% versus 4%), and graduation checks and questions (7% versus 4%).

Table 7. Allocation of Time as an Advisor			
Indicate the average % of time that you spend on the following tasks each week.	**Average weekly percent (%)**	**Faculty average weekly percent (%)**	**Non-faculty average weekly percent (%)**
Appointments with advisees	23%	9%*	35%*
Instruction (i.e. prepping for/teaching class)	21%	43%*	3%*
Responding to students via email/text/phone	18%	10%*	25%*
Non-advising related events and meetings	10%	10%	11%
Campus committee work	9%	14%*	6%*
Bay Advisor notes (entering/reviewing)	7%	3%*	11%*
Grad checks and/or graduation questions	6%	4%*	7%*
Other	6%	8%	5%

Note: Differences between faculty and non-faculty advisors were determined using independent sample T-tests. **Significant differences at the 0.05 level** between faculty and non-faculty advisors were measured by T-Test, and significant differences are denoted with an asterisk. Only responses that added up to 100% were included in analysis (ex. if respondents entered 0% for every category, they were excluded).

Advisors Have Received Training on…

- Advisors most frequently reported having received training on the following topics: academic regulations, policies, and procedures (65%); equitable and culturally competent advising (58%); and managing students in crisis (57%).
- The least frequently reported training topics covered for advisors were: time management (28%); the statewide transfer model (22%); and career and employment information for students (21%).
- Comparing faculty advisors and non-faculty advisors:
    - Non-faculty were more likely to report having received training on career and employment information for students (33% compared to 6%).
    - Non-faculty were more likely to report having received training on technology to support work efficiency (64% compared to 39%).
    - Non-faculty were more likely to report having received training on equitable and culturally competent advising practices (70% compared to 44%).
    - Non-faculty were more likely to report having received training on time management (42% compared to 11%).
    - Non-faculty were more likely to report having received training on time management (81% compared to 44%); and
    - Non-faculty were more likely to report having received training on advising skills (79% compared to 19%).
- Compared to longtime advisors, more junior advisors were less likely to report having received training on academic regulations, policies, and procedures (49% versus 79%); ADA regulations (22% versus 48%); and the statewide transfer model (8% versus 33%).
- Only 27% of BIPOC advisors reported having received training on managing difficult conversations, compared to 60% of white advisors.

Table 8. Formal Training Received		
Training Topics	N	Percent (%) Yes
Academic regulations, policies, and procedures	79	65%
Equitable/culturally competent academic advising practices	79	58%
Managing students in crisis	79	57%
Institutional student data sources	78	53%
Technology to support work efficiency	78	53%
Advising skills (e.g. principles and values of academic advising)	79	52%
Managing difficult conversations	79	47%
Timely student graduation (e.g. ensuring students stay on track)	79	39%
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations	79	35%
Retention of students (e.g., preventing student departure)	79	29%
Time management	79	28%
Statewide transfer model (Star Act – ADT)	79	22%
Career and employment information for students	78	21%

Advisors Need Training on…

- Overall, a high proportion (65% or more) of advisors reported needing training on the following topics:
    - Managing students in crisis (70%)
    - Institutional student data sources (69%)
    - Career and employment information for students (68%)
    - Equitable and culturally competent advising practices (68%)
    - Student retention (66%), and
    - Managing difficult conversations (65%)
- Compared to faculty advisors, non-faculty advisors were more likely to report that additional training is needed on career and employment information for students (79% compared to 54%) and on institutional student data sources (79% compared to 58%).
- Compared to longtime advisors, more junior advisors were more likely to report needing training on academic regulations, policies, and procedures (78% compared to 49%) and the statewide transfer model (73% compared to 51%).
- BIPOC advisors were more likely than white advisors to report that further training was needed on the following topics:
    - Technology to support work efficiency (77% compared to 50%)
    - Managing difficult conversations (76% compared to 53%)
    - ADA regulations (76% compared to 49%)
    - Retention of students (79% compared to 53%), and
    - Statewide transfer model (79% compared to 47%)

Table 9. Formal Training Needed		
Training Topics	**N**	**% Yes**
Managing students in crisis	77	70%
Institutional student data sources	78	69%
Career and employment information for students	77	68%
Equitable/culturally competent academic advising practices	77	68%
Retention of students (e.g., preventing student departure)	76	66%
Managing difficult conversations	76	65%
Technology to support work efficiency	79	63%
Academic regulations, policies, and procedures	78	63%
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations	77	62%
Statewide transfer model (Star Act – ADT)	76	62%
Timely student graduation (e.g. ensuring students stay on track)	76	59%
Advising skills (e.g. principles and values of academic advising)	76	55%
Time management	77	49%

Concerns in the Work Environment

- Concerns about misinformation (e.g., students relying on friends instead of advisors; students receiving conflicting advice from other advisors) were the most commonly reported concerns among advisors, along with students being unprepared for advising meetings (2.1), and poor coordination between different offices or colleges (1.7).
- Overall, advisors reported that lack of respect and support in the workplace was low.
- Compared to faculty advisors, non-faculty advisors on average reported more concern about a lack of career ladder (with a mean score of 1.85 compared to 0.21).
- No significant differences were found by years advising or by advisor race/ethnicity.

Table 10. Work Environment		
Have experienced…(0=Have not experienced concern, 1=Once each term, Monthly=2, Weekly=3, Daily=4)	**N**	**Mean score**
Students relying on friends instead of advisors about GE or Major information	76	2.3
Students unprepared for advising sessions	74	2.1
Students getting conflicting/incorrect advice from other advisors	76	2.0
Poor coordination with other offices/colleges	75	1.7
Difficulties making appropriate referrals	77	1.2
Lack of respect from students	75	1.1
Lack of career ladder	74	1.1
Negative public image of advising	74	0.92
Difficulty with technology, virtual settings and/or home office set-up	77	0.83
Lack of respect from administrators	76	0.71
Lack of respect from faculty	74	0.71
No input into my departmental policies	73	0.68
Lack of support from supervisors	74	0.53
Lack of respect from staff	74	0.50

Note: This question was scored based on how frequently advisors reported accessing each concern: 0=Have not experienced concern, 1=Once each term, Monthly=2, Weekly=3, Daily=4. Mean scores were reported.

Performance Evaluation

Advisors most frequently reported having their advising evaluated through self-evaluation (70%), followed by evaluation by a supervisor (60%). Evaluations by students (40%) and by peers (14%) were less common.

Table 11. Performance Evaluation		
Methods used to evaluate effective advising in your unit…	N	Average score
Self-evaluation	71	70%
Evaluation by a supervisor	63	60%
Evaluation by students	55	40%
Evaluation by peers	51	14%

Reward System for Advisors

When asked if there is a rewards system for academic advising in their unit, nearly all respondents (97%) said that there is not.

Table 12. Reward System		
Is there a system for rewarding academic advising in your unit?	N	Percent (%)
Yes	2	3%
No	74	97%

Additional Feedback and Suggestions from Staff

At the end of the survey, there was additional space for advisors to provide additional comments or suggestions for improving advising at CSUEB. These responses were coded in NVivo qualitative software. A few main themes emerged.

Faculty feel over-burdened

Faculty advisors expressed feeling over-burdened and under-resourced, particularly with advising students on general education requirements.

> *"As a faculty person, I have always taken comfort in knowing that I am only supposed to advise on major course requirements and did not have to worry about all the other rules and regulations surrounding GE. This year I was informed that I am responsible for advising GE. I crammed for an hour or so before my first appointment. I feel very uncomfortable with these expanded duties. Advising is only a fraction of my job so I don't have time to stay up on everything. And yet it is SO important to get it right. I think burdening faculty with GE advising is not the right way to go if you want students to have a streamlined experience. Although I try, I am not their best advisor because I don't have all of the knowledge or time to get it right."*

Need for additional staff training

Advisors expressed a need for additional staff training on a wide range of topics including institutional policies, equity and inclusion, advising best practices, data-informed advising, and GE requirements.

> *"I would love an advising handbook to be sent out at the beginning of the year that provides the basic resources and highlight[s] all of the changes that were made in the previous academic year. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with new legislation and policies."*

> *"There also needs to be better training on best practices in advising from caseload management, to equity concepts, and even GE/Major catalog rights, rules and policies."*

Staff recommend more cross-team Collaboration

Advisors expressed concerns about the overall advising infrastructure as well. They reported feeling that there was a need for more cohesion and collaboration among different advising offices, and that students are receiving different information depending on which advisors they engage. Some suggested that all forms of advising be consolidated to one specific office, while others emphasized that each part of advising needs to stick to their clearly defined roles. A few noted that staff should be better included in decision-making that impacts advisors.

> *"I believe there is a passionate interest in helping student[s] with advising, but have concerns that this desire has resulted in attempting so many different approaches that it doesn't feel focused or necessarily effective."*

> *"There are too many cooks in the kitchen. Some students can have 5 advisors and they don't always give the correct/same information."*

> *"It's very disjointed and silos exist. There isn't a central place to keep up with all the changes that occur with the advising model. Often I feel left out of the conversations and am unaware of what EB is doing to support our students academically."*

> *"Advisors who actually have one-on-one contact with students and work with them directly should always be at the table when discussing and planning changes and improvements to the advising infrastructure."*