
Center for Student Advising

Assessment 2010-11 Results
April 22, 2012



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History: 1998-2012

1998-1999	4 class centers established; ratio of 430 students :: 1 adviser
1999-2002	Division-wide planning takes place
2002-2003	4 class centers merge into 2: FYSAAC and JSAC
2006-2007	Follow-up study initiated
2007-2008	2 centers merge into CSA with advisers in 5 locations; students assigned same adviser for 4 years; CSA unites ASP, CUSP, Preprofessional Advising; ratio of 300-350 students :: 1 adviser
2008-2009	Austin E. Quigley Endowment for Student Success established Advisers assigned to SEAS departments as liaisons & advising specialists
2009-2010	Planning takes place for new space and advising assessment
2010-2011	Center in Lerner 400 opens with goal of 240 students :: 1 adviser
2011-2012	Focus on Assessment: evidence gathering, data analysis, roll-out, change implementation

The Assessment Cycle

Peggy Maki, Assessing for Learning



CSA's Assessment Process

- ▶ Community Conversations on Advising: 2009–10
- ▶ Vision & Mission Statements: May 2010
- ▶ Expectations of Advisers & Advisees: Summer 2010
- ▶ Assessment Plan: Fall 2010
- ▶ CSA Survey of Students: 2010–2011
- ▶ Focus Groups: May 2011
- ▶ Data Analysis: 2011–2012
- ▶ Spring 2012: Roll-Out

CSA's Vision & Mission

- ▶ **CSA Vision:** We will be a trusted and indispensable source of knowledge and support for all students and a widely emulated model of advising excellence across the nation and around the globe.
- ▶ **CSA Mission:** The Center for Student Advising strives to guide and support students at Columbia College and Columbia Engineering in their journey within and beyond Columbia University.

Programmatic Goals

To this end, CSA advisers:

- 1) help students recognize and pursue their passions;
- 2) challenge students to set realistic academic and life goals to ensure personal success;
- 3) empower students to think and act creatively and independently;
and
- 4) help students understand their role in all of their advising relationships to enable them to form productive advising partnerships.

The CSA shall assess, analyze, and evaluate its work continuously to determine ways to grow along with its constituent population. In short, it is our mission to help students become the best possible versions of themselves.

The Advising Partnership

- ▶ Productive advising is built on a true partnership in which the student and the adviser work together.
- ▶ The spirit of an ideal advising partnership is one of mutual engagement, responsiveness, and dedication.
- ▶ Regular advising conversations, the fundamental building blocks of the partnership, enable an adviser to serve as a resource of knowledge and a source of referrals - so that students may plan and prepare, in the broadest sense, over the course of their years at Columbia.

To Make This Partnership a Success...

▶ **Students should:**

- ▶ Actively engage in the advising relationship
- ▶ Respond to adviser outreach and be forthcoming about perceived obstacles to success
- ▶ Proactively research and plan ways to reach academic goals and be open to sharing these goals with their advisers
- ▶ Be open to researching the answers to questions with advisers in order to learn ways to find information on their own
- ▶ Act upon referrals to other sources of information and advice
- ▶ Let advisers know when they have not been able to find information and advice they need.

Expectations

▶ **Advisers should:**

- ▶ Be knowledgeable, responsive, and supportive
- ▶ Reach out to advisees, especially when an advisee seems to be struggling
- ▶ Inquire about students' short- and long-term goals and ask students to consider studying abroad, fellowships, scholarships, internships, research opportunities, etc.
- ▶ Research the answers to questions with students as a way to show students how and where to find information on their own
- ▶ Refer students to other sources of advice and information and connect advisees with appropriate faculty members and departments
- ▶ Follow up with students on important matters in a timely way.

SloverLinett Strategies Engagement: 2011

2010-11 CSA SURVEY & DISCUSSION GROUPS

CSA Survey Project Overview: Objectives

Phase 1:
CSA-Administered Survey
of Columbia
Undergraduates

Phase 2:
Discussion Groups with
Columbia Undergraduates

- Phase 1 (the quantitative research) was guided by the following set of research objectives:
 - Measure the utilization of the CSA by undergraduates, including types of advising and services and frequency of visits and interactions with advisers
 - Measure ways students use their community of advisers that includes the CSA and other advisers (graduate students, TAs, faculty, etc.)
 - Evaluate the student experience with CSA advisers, including the nature of their outreach to students, their knowledge base, and their support of students in becoming the “best possible versions of themselves”
 - Evaluate the engagement and responsiveness of students in their partnership with CSA advisers
 - Evaluate students’ comfort level with the CSA as a physical space
- Using data from the online survey, we also examine student experiences with each of the CSA’s advisers , resulting in an adviser profile for each staff member

[\(The survey was designed and fielded by the Division of Student Affairs.\)](#)

Discussion Groups Project overview: Objectives

Phase 1:
CSA-Administered Survey of
Columbia Undergraduates

Phase 2:
Discussion Groups with
Columbia
Undergraduates

- Phase 2 (the qualitative research) was guided by the following set of research objectives:
 - Explore how students recognize and pursue their academic passions and life goals
 - Explore how students build their community of advisers
 - Evaluate the student experience with CSA advisers
 - Evaluate the engagement and responsiveness of students in their partnership with CSA advisers
 - Assess how integrated the CSA experience is with other advising experiences
 - Determine the impact of the CSA advising experience on the overall student experience

CSA Survey Project: Methodology

- ▶ In fall 2010, all enrolled CC and SEAS students were invited to participate via email (November 15, 2010 to February 20, 2011)
- ▶ > 1,850 students responded
 - ▶ Response rate -- 31% (5,922 were invited to participate)
 - ▶ Respondent breakdown by school:
 - ▶ College students: 1,338 responded (30% response rate)
 - ▶ Engineering students: 512 responded (35% response rate)
 - ▶ Respondent breakdown by class year:
 - ▶ First-years: 614 (42% response rate)
 - ▶ Sophomores: 450 (30% response rate)
 - ▶ Juniors: 385 (25% response rate)
 - ▶ Seniors: 401 (28% response rate)
- ▶ SloverLinett Strategies analyzed the results of the CSA online survey
 - ▶ 41 responses were excluded from the sample because of incomplete or duplicate responses
 - ▶ The incomplete responses included only a handful of questions, so in order to keep the sample as clean as possible for clarity of interpretation, we did not include these students
 - ▶ Because response rates varied by school, class year, and gender, the data were weighted on the basis of these three characteristics to ensure that they are representative of the overall undergraduate population at Columbia

Discussion Groups Project: Methodology

- ▶ 8 groups among Columbia CC & SEAS undergraduates
- ▶ Group composition comprised a mix of:
 - 1) Frequency of use
 - ▶ Six groups of students who use the CSA on a moderate or frequent basis
 - ▶ Two groups of students who use the CSA very infrequently
 - 2) Undergraduate school
 - ▶ Four groups of Columbia College undergraduates
 - ▶ Four groups with a mix of **CC and SEAS** undergraduates
 - Note: SEAS undergraduates comprised roughly 25% of the participants, in total—a similar proportion that to which the CSA serves
 - 3) Class year
 - ▶ Four groups of 1st-year and 2nd-year students
 - ▶ Four groups of 3rd-year and 4th-year students
- ▶ Discussion groups were held in Lerner Hall and were recruited by Slover Linett Strategies (with advertising and communications help from the Division of Student Affairs)
- ▶ The groups were held on May 3rd and May 4th, 2011
 - ▶ Each group lasted 90 minutes
 - ▶ Each group consisted of 7-10 respondents for a total of 74 respondents

Open-Ended Response Analysis: Methodology

- ▶ The CSA Assessment team parsed the open-ended responses according to prevalent key words
- ▶ CSA advisers analyzed the responses for each key word
- ▶ Office of Institutional Research provided guidance

Overarching Themes

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Themes

- ▶ Roles & Offerings
- ▶ Knowledge
- ▶ Accessibility
- ▶ Connectivity

Roles & Offerings

- ▶ Many students consider the CSA their “first stop” in getting the help they need with the administrative aspects of their academic experience.
- ▶ Undergraduates have a very clear sense of what to go to the CSA for – its core functions are very well understood across campus.
- ▶ In general, students view their CSA adviser as a **good to great** resource for most potential issues.
 - ▶ 73% of students say the CSA is meeting their advising needs.
 - ▶ 78% of students would recommend their advisers to others.

Roles & Offerings, continued

- ▶ CSA advisers are widely seen as the “go-to” resource for areas such as curricular planning and registration
- ▶ Of students who would turn to a Columbia advising resource for advice on a given issue, students see the CSA as the go-to place for:
 - ▶ Registration issues – 89%
 - ▶ Academic issues – 67%
 - ▶ Graduate School advising – 69%
 - ▶ Preprofessional school advising – 71%
 - ▶ Study abroad advising – 80%
 - ▶ Non-major advising – 78%
 - ▶ Major advising – 59%

Roles & Offerings, continued

- ▶ A significant number of students spoke highly of the CSA's ability to help students navigate the administration and departments across Columbia.

Challenges

- ▶ There is room for enhancement in newer, broader CSA goal areas
 - ▶ Encouraging students to pursue their passions
 - ▶ Advisers should be more proactive in the adviser/student relationship
- ▶ Students have very different advising experiences; this has a big impact on their perceptions & utilization of the CSA as a whole
- ▶ Of students who would turn to a Columbia advising resource for advice on a given issue, only 51% would turn to their CSA adviser for help with personal issues

Knowledge

- ▶ Students speak highly of the CSA's ability to provide general information that students need.
 - ▶ 85% find their adviser to be knowledgeable about the curriculum
 - ▶ 86% say their adviser has referred them to other resources, when necessary
 - ▶ 75% say their adviser assists them in long- and short-term goal-setting
 - ▶ 69% say their adviser helped them learn ways to research answers to questions
 - ▶ 71% say their adviser challenged them to set realistic academic and life goals

Challenges

- ▶ Students say advisers are not as knowledgeable as they could be in major advising (note that major advising is not part of CSA's core mission).
- ▶ Students feel that the quality of CSA advising can vary.
- ▶ Perceptions of CSA quality can also vary by each adviser/advisee relationship.

Knowledge, continued

- ▶ Students want to rely on and trust the CSA and their advisers to know information, or know where students can find it.
- ▶ The way advisers address issues has a huge impact on student perception of CSA, its assistance, and its commitment.
- ▶ When an adviser does not have the information the student is seeking, students appreciate it when the adviser:
 - ▶ acknowledges this
 - ▶ directs them to someone who can help them
 - ▶ proactively troubleshoots ways to address the issue

Accessibility

- ▶ Most students meet and email with their CSA adviser at least once per semester
- ▶ Email communication between students and advisers is as frequent—if not *more* frequent—than face-to-face meetings
 - ▶ Very few students communicate with their adviser *solely* through email, indicating a healthy base for student-adviser interactions
- ▶ Students say advisers:
 - ▶ Are approachable – 92%
 - ▶ Are responsive – 89%
 - ▶ Are supportive – 88%
 - ▶ Follow up promptly – 79%

Accessibility, continued

- ▶ By Fall 2010-Spring 2011, the new CSA space had begun to increase the number of meetings between students and advisers.
- ▶ 96% of students rated the new Center positively
 - ▶ The physical space and central location of the new office is a huge plus in students' eyes.
 - ▶ Its central location further enforces their perception of the CSA as a first stop in seeking help.
 - ▶ The name "Center for Student Advising" connotes a hub of guidance and support.

Challenges

- ▶ Some students expect quicker responses to emails
- ▶ Managing the transition for the 27% of students who experience a change in adviser

Connectivity

- ▶ Students highly value a strong advising partnership with their advisers, what we refer to as “*connectivity*.” Students who feel connected are more likely to actively engage in the student-adviser partnership.
- ▶ There is an extremely strong correlation between students’ likelihood to recommend their adviser and their likelihood of feeling that the CSA as a whole is meeting their advising needs.

Connectivity, continued

- ▶ The most positive advisees spoke of advisers who show their genuine care for their advisees by going “*above and beyond*”
 - ▶ stepping in to help in a time of crisis
 - ▶ acting as a mentor
 - ▶ listening to students
- ▶ Students’ experiences with advisers who go above and beyond is a primary measure of their adviser’s overall quality, and reflects directly on how students see the CSA.

Connectivity, continued

- ▶ Students rated their own engagement in the advising partnership:
 - ▶ 92% are open to sharing goals with their adviser
 - ▶ 91% acted on adviser's referrals
 - ▶ 90% are proactive in planning ways to reach academic goals
 - ▶ 88% are responsive to adviser's outreach

Challenges

- ▶ Students get discouraged—and are more likely to disengage—if they feel that their adviser is not supporting them in a proactive way.
- ▶ There is a clear distinction between satisfied and dissatisfied advisees—the degree to which their adviser showed a genuine interest in them and their lives.

Profiles of Key Sub-groups

- ▶ **College vs. Engineering**
 - ▶ Engineering students are more likely than College students to say that their advising needs are being met by the CSA (77 vs. 71%)
 - ▶ Engineering students are currently going to the CSA for less complex help than are their peers in the College
- ▶ **Class Year**
 - ▶ CSA advisers are one of the major on-campus resources for first-years
 - ▶ First-years are more likely than students in any other class year to report proactive, inspirational, knowledgeable advisers
 - ▶ First-years are more forthcoming and engaged with their advisers than upperclassmen
 - ▶ Students' relationships with their CSA advisers start early, but currently seem to wane over time

Areas of Excellence

1. The CSA fulfills its role as a **key source of general information** for students
2. **Academic planning, registration, study abroad, and non-major advising** is seen as helpful
3. Advisers are praised when they **guide students towards future academic/career pursuits**
4. Students rely on the CSA to help them “**navigate the system**” at Columbia
5. The best advisers **listen and lend moral support**
6. Students appreciate when advisers **act as intermediaries** when students need them to
7. The **CSA’s new office and location** are seen as positive

Challenge Areas

1. Students may only depend on the CSA for **basic questions or issues**
2. Dissatisfied students point to CSA advisers' **lack of knowledge** on certain topics
3. Receiving **referrals** to other sources can be frustrating to students who want answers directly from their adviser
4. Students do not want to be directed to the **web**—especially if they have already looked for information there
5. Some students complain that they were given **incorrect or incomplete information** by their adviser
6. There is a desire to feel advisers are on students' side **with more proactive support**
7. **Quality** of CSA advising can be hit-or-miss in students' eyes
8. Working within **Columbia's bureaucracy** is a challenge that students also feel at the CSA

Changes Implemented and Planned

- ▶ Summer advising session agenda
- ▶ CSA peer advising pilot program
- ▶ Adviser assignment/switches protocol
- ▶ CSA-wide outreach/communications plan
- ▶ Office signage re adviser availability
- ▶ Revised new student welcome letter
- ▶ Increased time with advisers during NSOP
- ▶ Enhanced professional development opportunities for advisers