

Chapter 12

Administrator Beliefs

Aaron H. Carlstrom

In this chapter, responses to one survey question lead to a better understanding of respondents' perceptions of upper-level administrator beliefs about the primary function of advising undergraduates. Respondents were asked to indicate which of three statements—facilitating student development, teaching and facilitating student learning, and assisting with course enrollment—best reflects the beliefs of administrators in their advising situation. They could choose an open response option to enter an administrator belief not listed as an answer option on the survey. Two compilations were provided as open responses: (a) a combination of the answers provided on the survey and (b) a combination of remarks on facilitating retention, persistence, and graduation.

This chapter is organized as follows: The Executive Summary highlights the overarching findings about administrators' beliefs, the Administrator Belief Summary presents the overall findings in more detail than illustrated in the Executive Summary, and the Results section, the most detailed, presents general and disaggregated results by institutional size and type, mandatory advising, advising personnel, and advising situation. See “Implications of Data on Administrator Beliefs” by Joshua Smith for his thoughts about the meaning of the results for academic advisors, administrators, the profession of academic advising, and future research.

The following question preceded the answer options:

Which one of the following best describes what **upper-level administration** (administrators above the dean level) believes is the **primary function** of undergraduate academic advising in **your advising situation**?

Executive Summary of Upper-Level Administrators' Beliefs About Advising

The extent to which respondents perceive upper-level administrators' (i.e., above the dean level) beliefs about the primary function of advising undergraduates is reviewed in this chapter. The phrase *in general* refers to a review of results without consideration for other factors, such as size of institution; this information is found in Figure 12.1 and Table 12.1. Results are reviewed in a disaggregated format for factors such as size of institution, advising personnel, and degree of mandatory advising. For example, where size of institution is used to disaggregate the data, small, medium, and large institutions are compared in regard to respondents' perceptions of administrators' beliefs about advising. See Figures 12.2 and 12.3 and Tables 12.2 to 12.6.

Four overarching findings characterize responses to the survey item on administrator beliefs. First, in general, more respondents indicated that administrators believe that assisting with course enrollment (1 of 3) or facilitating student development (1 of 3) is the primary function of advising than indicated it is to facilitate student learning. For each category (e.g., size of institution) used to disaggregate the results, data show that assistance with course enrollment and facilitation of student development were the top two beliefs, although the most-reported belief varied by category. However, within a given category of institution (e.g., small) differences do not exceed 10% in reported administrator beliefs regarding assistance with course enrollment and facilitation of student development; the only exception emerged in the private bachelor institution

category, which shows that 11% more respondents indicated that administrators believe facilitating student development, rather than assisting with student course enrollment, is the primary advising role.

Second, respondents at 1 of 5 institutions indicated that administrators believe teaching and facilitating student learning are of greater importance in advising than helping with course enrollments or facilitating student development. However, at private bachelor institutions facilitation of student development is seen as the key advising function, and helping with course enrollment as well as teaching and facilitating student learning are reported in equal proportions. Approximately 5% of respondents used the open-answer option to indicate administrator beliefs. Their responses were counted and categorized as follows: (a) a combination of facilitating student development, teaching and facilitating learning, and assisting with course enrollment or (b) facilitating retention, persistence, and graduation.

Third, the disaggregated data reveal only a few notable differences (10 to 17%) involving the beliefs about advisors helping with course enrollment (institution type), facilitating student development (institution type and advising personnel), and teaching and facilitating student learning (advising personnel). Finally, except for those from public bachelor institutions, a meaningful percentage of respondents reported not knowing upper-level administrators' beliefs about the primary function of advising undergraduates.

Notable Differences

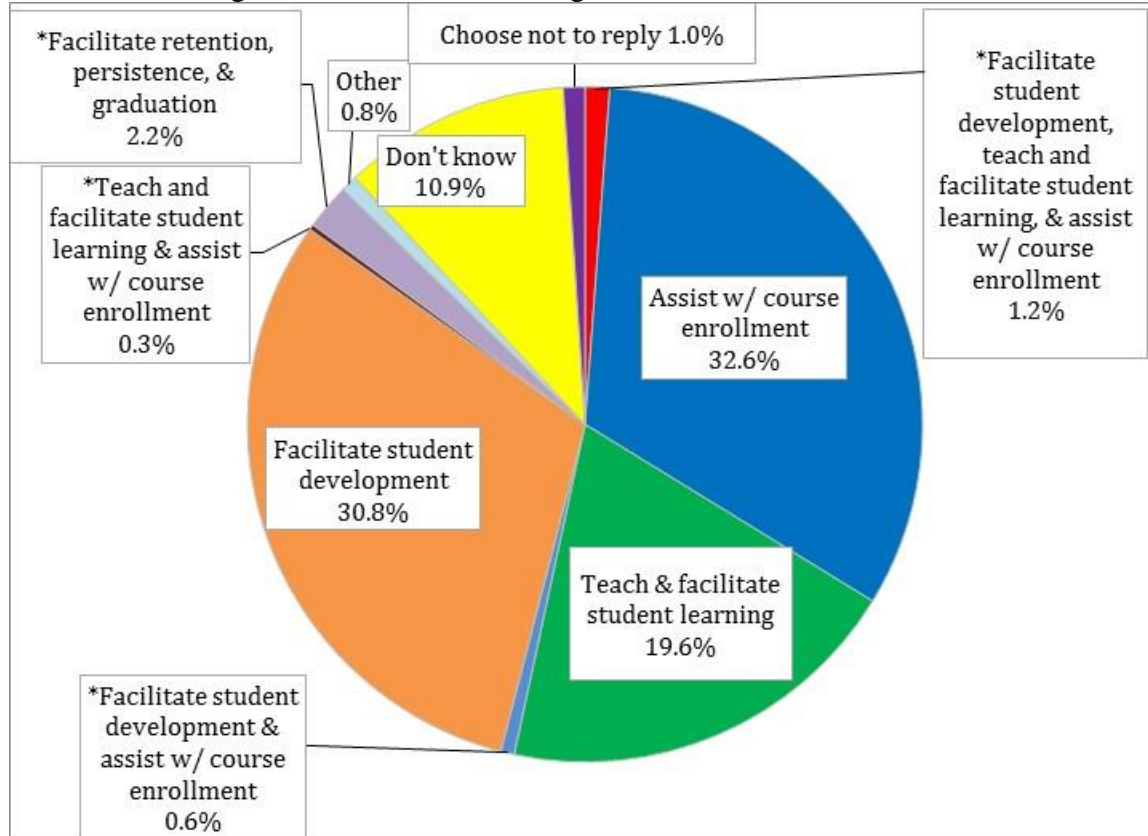
To help readers assess the meaning of the data, differences of 10% or more between categories of institutions (e.g., large vs. small institutions, advising is mandatory

vs. not mandatory) are labeled *notable*. For example, according to respondents, administrators at 37% of institutions employing full-time professional advisors believe that facilitating student development is the primary function of advising, but administrators at 26% of institutions with full-time faculty advisors reportedly hold the same belief. This difference of 11% is equal to or greater than 10%, so it is labeled *notable*. All results are presented in tables, and bar graphs are used to present data that show two or more notable differences within a category of institution for a specific belief. For example, data show notable differences between two reported beliefs in the advising personnel category, so a bar graph is provided in Figure 12.3.

Furthermore, three groups comprised samples of fewer than 50 respondents, and thus, a change in the answer of one respondent would result in a change of more than 2%. A difference found among these groups is reported only if it meets or exceeds 10% when one response is added or subtracted. For example, 25% of respondents from public master and 13% from proprietary institutions reported that their administrators believe teaching and facilitating student learning comprise the key advising function. However, because only 24 respondents came from proprietary institutions, if one more respondent from this group had reported this belief, then the response rate for those in the proprietary institution category would increase to 17%, thus creating a difference between respondents from proprietary and public master institutions of less than 10%; therefore, the difference in responses between percentages shown for these two institutions is not labeled as *notable*. The following three categories are comprised of fewer than 50 respondents, and the approximate percentage change associated with one respondent is provided in parentheses: public bachelor institutions ($n = 30$; 3.3%), proprietary

institutions ($n = 24$; 4.2%), and department level ($n = 42$; 2.4%). Inferences involving these groups should be made cautiously.

Figure 12.1. Percentages of respondents reporting administrator beliefs about the primary function of undergraduate academic advising

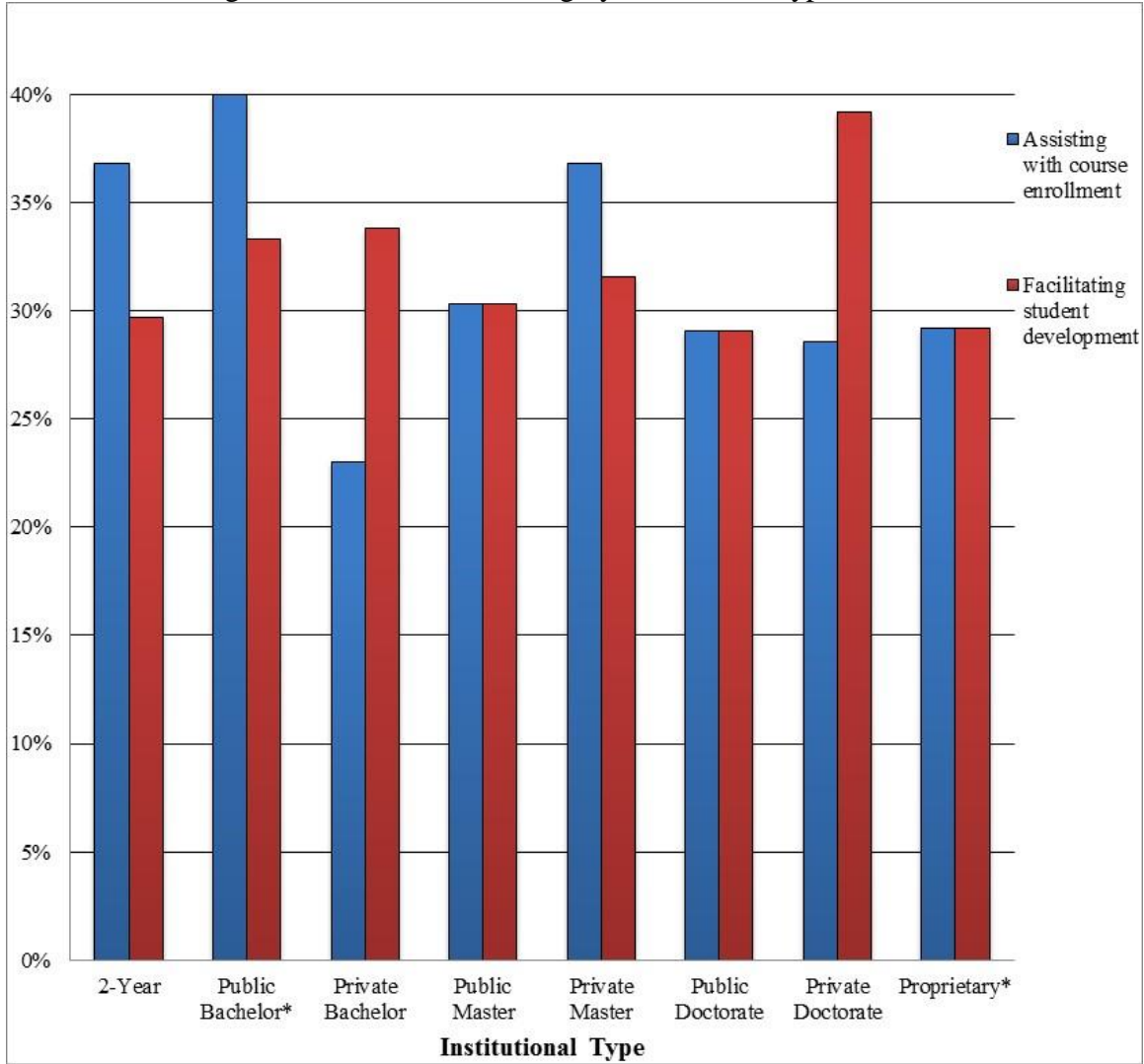


Note. * Refers to responses given in an open-ended response option

Administrative Beliefs on Primary Role of Academic Advising	Response Percentage
Assisting with course enrollment	32.6
Facilitating student development	30.8
Teaching & facilitating student learning	19.6
Don't know	10.9
Retention/persistence/graduation	2.2
Facilitating student development, teaching & facilitating student learning, & assisting with course enrollment	1.2
Choose not to reply	1.0
Other	.8
Facilitating student development & assisting with course enrollment	.6
Teaching & facilitating student learning, assisting with course enrollment	.3

Note. Values under 3 percent, except those in the choose not to reply category, represent entries given in the open-response option.

Figure 12.2. Percentages of respondents reporting administrator beliefs about the primary function of undergraduate academic advising by institutional type

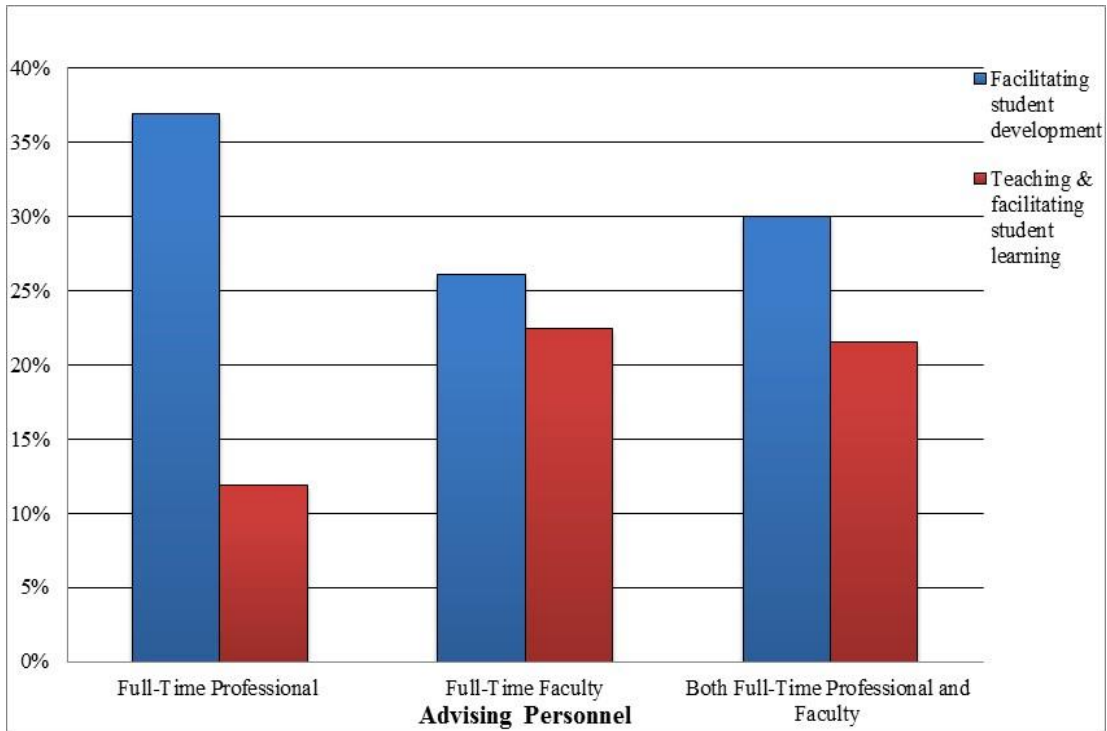


Note. *Fewer than 50 institutions represented

Institutional Type	Percentage Citing Administrator Beliefs About Advising Roles	
	Assisting With Course Enrollment	Facilitating Student Development
2-Year	36.8	29.7
Public bachelor	40.0	33.3
Private bachelor	23.0	33.8
Public master	30.3	30.3
Private master	36.8	31.6
Public doctorate	29.1	29.1
Private doctorate	28.6	39.2
Proprietary	29.2	29.2

Note. Fewer than 50 respondents from public bachelor and proprietary institutions responded to the question.

Figure 12.3. Percentages of respondents reporting administrator beliefs about the primary function of undergraduate academic advising by advising personnel



Percentage Citing Administrator Beliefs About Advising Roles		
Advising Personnel	Facilitating Student Development	Teaching and Facilitating Student Learning
Full-time professional	36.9	11.9
Full-time faculty	26.1	22.5
Full-time professional and faculty	30.0	21.5

Administrator Beliefs Summary

In this section, both general and disaggregated findings are summarized. As in the Executive Summary, *in general* refers to a review of results without consideration for other factors, such as institutional size; this information is found in Figure 12.1 and Table 12.1. Results reviewed in a disaggregated format for factors such as size and type of institution, advising personnel, and mandatory advising policy are found in Figures 12.2 and 12.3 as well as Tables 12.2 to 12.6.

In general, respondents from equal percentages of institutions (approximately 1 of 3) reported that their administrators believe that assisting with course enrollment or facilitating student development is the primary function of advisors. Fewer (1 of 5) indicated that teaching and facilitating student learning comprise the key advising function, and approximately 5% listed other beliefs (i.e., facilitating retention, persistence, and graduation, and combinations of the course enrollment, student development, and student learning functions). Furthermore, meaningful percentages of respondents reported that they do not know their administrators' beliefs about undergraduate advising (see Figure 12.1 and Table 12.1).

When the results are disaggregated, a few, small, notable differences emerge in respondents' reports of upper-level administrator beliefs about the primary function of advising undergraduates. These differences involved institution type and advising personnel (see Figures 12.2 and 12.3 as well as Tables 12.2 to 12.6).

According to respondents, upper-level administrators from fewer private bachelor than from 2-year, public bachelor and private master institutions believe that advisors should primarily assist with course enrollments. Only respondents from private bachelor

institutions reported help with course enrollment along with teaching and facilitating student learning at approximately the same percentages; the respondents from other institutions indicated in favor of the former such that a meaningful pattern emerged between these two reported beliefs.

Additionally, more administrators from private doctorate than public doctorate universities and from institutions with full-time professional advisors than those with full-time faculty advisors reportedly believe that facilitating student development is the most important advisor function. More respondents from institutions with full-time faculty advisors and those with full-time professional and faculty advisors than those with full-time professional advisors indicated that administrators believe that teaching and facilitating student learning make up the primary advising function.

Results

In this section, results of respondents' perceptions of upper-level administrator beliefs about the primary function of advising undergraduates are presented in general and in disaggregated form for size and type of institution, mandatory advising policy, advising personnel, and advising situation.

General Findings

In general, approximately equal proportions of respondents (1 of 3) reported that administrators believe that assisting with course enrollment or facilitating student development comprise the key advising function in their situations. Fewer (1 in 5) respondents indicated that teaching and facilitating student learning describe the key beliefs of their administrator. Approximately 5% used the open-ended option to write

other administrator beliefs about primary advising functions: facilitating retention, persistence, and graduation, and combinations of the course enrollment, student development, and teach and student learning options. One of 10 respondents reported that they do not know their administrators' beliefs about advising (see Figure 12.1 and Table 12.1).

Size of Institution

No notable differences emerged in the institutional size data category. However, consistent with the general findings, an equal percentage of respondents from all three institutional sizes cited assisting with course enrollment and facilitating student development as the beliefs held by administrators about primary advising functions (between 28 to 36% and 30 to 33%, respectively). Respondents from 17 to 25% of institutions reported that their administrators believe teaching and facilitating student learning make up the key function, and 6 to 13% do not know their administrators' views about advising undergraduates (see Table 12.2).

Institutional Type

Consistent with the general findings, assisting with course enrollment and facilitating student development were the administrator beliefs cited (with one exception) by most respondents, and teaching and facilitating student learning was the third-most reported belief (with one exception per the institutional type category). Furthermore, *don't know* was the selected survey option by a meaningful percentage of participants from all institutional types with the exception of those from public bachelor institutions (3.3%).

However, the percentages and rank order of institutions where administrators reportedly believe that assistance with course enrollment and student development are key functions notably differ by institutional type (see Figure 12.2 and Table 12.3). Specifically, fewer respondents from private bachelor institutions (1 of 4) than those from 2-year (1 of 3), public bachelor (2 of 5), and private master (1 of 3) institutions cited assisting with course enrollment as administrators' perceived view of the key advising function by 14 to 17%. Only those from private bachelor institutions rated help with course enrollment and teaching and facilitating student learning beliefs as tied for the second-most reported administrator beliefs. As many as 10% more respondents from private doctorate (2 of 5) than those from public doctorate (3 of 10) institutions indicated that administrators believe advisors should primarily facilitate student development.

Mandatory Advising

The data reveal no notable differences by mandatory advising policy in the perception of administrator beliefs about the primary function of advising undergraduates. Consistent with the general findings, however, assisting with course enrollment and facilitating student development are considered key functions by administrators at approximately equal percentages of institutions regardless of mandatory advising policy (31 to 36% and 28 to 33%, respectively). Teaching and facilitating student learning are reportedly the perceived advising functions as per administrators at 15 to 22% of institutions, and as many as 1 of 10 respondents do not know their administrators' beliefs about undergraduate advising functions (see Table 12.4).

Advising Personnel

Consistent with the general findings, regardless of advising personnel in their situation, respondents indicated that assisting with course enrollment (approximately 1 of 3) and facilitating student development are deemed most important by administrators. They indicated that teaching and facilitating student learning make up the third-most reported belief about advising, and 10 to 16% selected the *don't know* option on the survey.

However, the percentages of institutions where administrators believe that assistance with facilitating student development and with teaching and facilitating student learning notably differ by advising personnel (see Figure 12.3 and Table 12.5). Specifically, respondents from more institutions with full-time professional advisors (1 of 3) than those from places with full-time faculty advisors (1 of 4), by 11%, indicated that administrators believe that facilitating student development is the primary advising function. However, more respondents from institutions with full-time faculty advisors and with both full-time professional and faculty advisors (1 of 5) selected the teaching and facilitating student learning option than those from institutions where full-time professional advisors (1 of 10) are employed (by 11 and 10%, respectively).

Advising Situation

For all three advising situations, assisting with course enrollment (28 to 34%) and facilitating student development (24 to 34%) are reported by the most respondents as administrator beliefs about key advising functions. Fewer respondents (15 to 26%) cited teaching and facilitating student learning, and 9 to 16% indicated that they do not know their administrators' beliefs (see Table 12.6).

