



# Voices from the Field: Researching Student Advising in Canada

Doyle, H., Ellingham, S., Pardy, L., Cameron, C., Fernandez, D., Fricker, T. (n.d). Pan-Canadian Survey of Academic Advising. University of the Fraser Valley.



## Summary Data

- **326** respondents across Canada
- Every province and territory represented (10 provinces, 3 territories)
- **Types of institutions:**
  - Private, post-secondary (college or university)
  - Public College or Community College
  - Public Technical Institution
  - Public Teaching/Intensive University
  - Public Research/Intensive University
- Majority of respondents (**50%**) had more than 20,000 students; and **28%** had between 10,000 and 19,999
- **21%** of respondents identified as Advising Manager/Administrator/Director
- **40%** of respondents highest level of education was a Master's degree
- **44%** of respondents indicated they had a decentralized (faculty or program based model of advising); with **32%** indicating a shared/dual model
- **45%** of respondents indicated their institution did not have mandatory advising for any programs and/or students
- **78%** indicated they did not use expressed learning outcomes to assess student learning
- **91%** of respondents indicated that students ask about occupation or career related information during advising
- **64%** indicated that they had attended a NACADA conference or webinar

## Administrators' Responses

Respondents who identified as an advising administrator, indicated a wide variety of **positions** including:

- Manager of academic advisors but not academic advising
- Coordinator of advising (supports & professional development)
- Responsible for decentralized or centralized advising
- Faculty-based advising responsibility

In addition, advising administrators indicated that they have multiple **duties** including:



### What does this tell us?

Our respondents identify "advising" as a significant part of their roles even if it wasn't explicit or their primary focus. Advising in Canada is not just one thing and may not look the same at every institution. In fact, it may not look the same at the same institution. There is no common structure of advising in Canada, and administrators tend to hold responsibility for a number of areas. In addition, an emerging trend in Canada is administrators who are responsible for advising professional development, but don't hold any supervisory authority over advisors.

## How do we assess advising?

- ✓ Surveys, interviews, focus groups, student self-reflection
- ✓ Annual survey
- ✓ Exit survey
- ✓ Curriculum development process
- ✓ Student grades
- ✓ Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) and National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) surveys
- ✓ Pre- and post- LASSI scores

### Standards of Advising

When asked of any specific competencies that are followed, the responses were mixed, from no standard approach, to NACADA Core Competencies. Others indicated that they also use the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) Competencies, as well as CAS Standards.

### What does this tell us?

As illustrated in the summary data, the large number of respondents indicated that they do not have identified learning outcomes of advising. Therefore, we can make an assumption that many of those who do have specific assessment measures, are focusing more specifically on student satisfaction.

In addition, when asked about competency models, more than half of the respondents indicated that they were not following a specific model or were unsure if any model was followed in their advising unit. One can also conclude from both of these responses that the notion of "advising as teaching" perhaps does not yet have much traction in the Canadian advising context.

## Professional Development

When asked about examples of training or professional development, administrators have engaged in **local** and **provincial** advising conferences most often. In addition, "**on campus sessions**" such as on **mental health first aid**, **conflict resolution** and **safe spaces** were also commonly mentioned.

Canada has also seen a rise in the availability of advising courses and certifications, most notably the **Centre for Higher Education, Research and Development (CHERD) Letter of Completion in Advising**.

**NACADA** webinars, regional conferences and allied organizations were also indicated as a common PD opportunity.

This tells us that professional development opportunities in Canada are as varied as the approaches taken to advising.

### Link to Social Justice

With a large Indigenous student population on post-secondary campuses across Canada, an increase of international students, and a focus of many subsets of student populations, social justice plays a large role on many of our campuses. Like the US, however, there are mixed responses regarding the incorporation of social justice and advising. Most respondents indicated that social justice was not part of advising, and that this normally was a referral to another support or service. Others mentioned that this was an aspirational goal, but not one currently realized. Of those that indicated that they did consider a social justice lens as part of advising, the three models considered were:

