Results of a Bronx Community College Advisement Study
May 11, 2018

Purpose:

This study was undertaken during the Fall 2017 semester in order to inform the development of campus-wide strategies to maximize the use and impact of the new advisement and early warning system, STARFISH (acquired with ASAP funding).   Given that advisement occurs in a variety of settings and departments at BCC, one central goal of this study is to inform the development of campus-wide advisement objectives and activities. Particular attention is focused on college-wide protocols, calendars, and communication with the goal of supporting student success and timely degree completion for all students at BCC. Study objectives included: identification of advisement strengths and challenges at BCC; recommendations regarding effective strategies for advisors/success coaches to partner with faculty and others across campus; and identification of campus-wide protocols and calendars for all faculty, staff and students to adopt.

Study Methodology:

The BCC Office of Institutional Research administered surveys and conducted in-person interviews and focus groups with faculty advisors, department chairpersons, academic advisors, success coaches, the supervisors of academic advisors/success coaches across the campus (including ASAP, FYS, CD, Academic Success Center, COPE, Veterans, etc.). An on-line survey (see Appendix) was sent via email to all academic advisors on campus (see list in Appendix). Supervisors of the advisors were asked to encourage participation in the survey. A total of 8 advisors from a variety of programs completed. In addition all academic chairpersons, members of the academic advisement committee and supervisors of advisors were invited to participate in focus groups and/or individual interviews. (see total list of invitees in Appendix). Of those invited, 18 participated in in-depth interviews and/or focus groups. These were conducted from December 2017-March, 2018. Results from these interviews, surveys and focus groups are reported below. A deliberate attempt has been made to assure that all voices are represented in the findings reported. Recommendations will be based on areas of strong consensus.

FINDINGS

Reported Current Advisement Functions/Roles

- Orientation to college policies, rules, expectations
- Academic planning (course selection, semester plans, long term plans)
- Transfer and scholarship planning and application
- Focus on completion (Meet with, outreach to and monitor students achievement of program benchmarks)
- Focus on skill/personal development
- Help students meet academic, personal and professional goals
- Support appropriate course schedules and sequences
- Make referrals to campus services

Reported Current Advisement Learning Outcomes

- Major and career selection
- Navigation of systems and electronic resources (CUNYfirst, degree works, OSSES)
- Navigation of college requirements, processes and accessing services and supports
- Academic planning (short and long term planning)
- Graduation requirements
- Relationship of career/personal goals with academic goals
- Developing self-sufficiency in achieving goals

Reported Advisement Strengths

- Success coaches have developed positive relationships with the Academic Departments and have gained knowledge about the academic program requirements of their assigned departments
- Dedicated success coaches and advisors
- ASAP advisement is intentional, organized, formalized, proactive, smaller caseloads
- ASAP oversight and tracking protocols - encourage accountability with coaching support
- Greater focus on completion
- FYS advisement contextualizes advisement as learning for application
- Academic Advisement Committee facilitates communication about advisement issues/topics across campus
- Advisorgram provides consistent info about academic requirements, changes in programs and requirements across campus
- Degreeworks makes requirements clear

Reported Advisement Challenges/Problems

- Assuring that students are taking courses in appropriate combinations and sequence
- Assuring that Academic Departments are recognized as authority of their programs
- Pre-requisite system is still not working (system errors/overrides).
- First term students who are not in FYS do not get benefits of coordinated advisement & peer mentoring
- Students often receive conflicting/contradictory advice across campus
- Difficult for advisors/success coaches to be in close proximity to academic departments.
- Large number of students who do not complete financial aid application/verification suggests need for more financial aid advisement/support
- Students in academic distress are not advised by specialists with smaller caseloads
- Supports for students in academic distress are not always clearly articulated and well-coordinated
- Appeals Processes and Communications (SAP, Academic, Course) are not yet well-coordinated and streamlined (this is in progress) to assure: timing prior to semester start; documentation alignment with narrative; and reduction of redundancy.

Reported Observations

- Hard copy letters (well-written) may get best response from students
- ASAP advisement caseloads are not based on majors
- One-year retention rates have been the highest for FYS students when advisors maintained caseloads for 2 semesters.

Recommendations from Study Participants

Curriculum

- Students must have current and accurate information about all of the requirements for a degree in their program
- Departments should ensure dissemination of recommended sequences of courses for students in their majors
- All advisors should use degree maps based on approved semester-by-semester course templates
- Better alignment of class schedules will help students get better course schedules to support more efficient completion of course requirements

Prerequisites

- Students must take remediation courses immediately, in sequence and consecutively
- Problems with prerequisite system should be addressed. It is still not working adequately.
- Limit those who are authorized to override and hold them accountable.
- Conduct study on students who passed Reading Accuplacer with low scores (55-60) to see how they performed in all classes. Those with 70+ probably doing ok;

Caseloads

- Caseload assignments should be completed soon after the beginning of each semester
- Caseload assignments are now documented in STARFISH
- Advisors with high risk students might be given smaller caseloads

New Students

- Continue improving new student orientation so that they get all the information they need to know, and how to access information in order to access the best academic advisement and support
- New students should be provided with a career/major assessment to help them clarify selected major
- Work towards providing incoming students with a sound (possibly) prescribed program – based on their major, preferred class times (morning, afternoon, evening, weekends) and suggested credit load (based on other obligations such as work, kids and academic preparedness)
- Develop appropriate advisement and programming for incoming transfer students
- Maximize enrollment in ASAP

First Year Program Advisement

- All first semester students should be advised by FYP advisors and mentored by FYP peers – even if not in FYS course
- Expand number of FYP advisors to accommodate all first year students (for first 2 semesters)
- Progress through remediation and gateway courses should be carefully monitored during 1st year
- Major program selection should be assessed and reaffirmed or changed after 1st semester

- Ensure that a high number of students qualify to join ASAP

Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships

- Improve <u>collaboration</u> between ASAP advisors and academic departments by:
    - Engaging 1 or more faculty from Academic Areas (such as STEM) to function as liaison to ASAP (and all the services and programming it can provide – including the identification/development of co- and extra-curricular programming- Academic Program workshops, which ASAP can easily fill with students)
    - Assigning 1 ASAP academic advisor as a liaison to Academic Departments/Programs (which will enable at least one advisor to become a specialist with respect to each of the departments and programs within the departments.
- Providing closer physical (or virtual) proximity for advisors/success coaches and the departments they serve

- Increase <u>communication</u> and interaction between advisors/success coaches across the campus by:
    - scheduling meetings on a regular basis
    - organizing advisement retreats/advisement days/open discussions
    - utilizing STARFISH fully to document advise and resulting student actions

- Encourage faculty within departments (possibly with reassigned time) to assume leadership in advisement training and tracking/reviewing analytics to support advisement and programming needs for majors

- Align advisement efforts with career development Simplicity calendar of activities for students

- Articulate separation of advisement responsibilities between variety of advisors (Academic Department, advisor/success coach, etc)

Professional Development

- Should include clear learning outcomes, benchmarks and professional competencies for advisors
- Should focus on policies and practice
- Should be based on sound student development theories and practices: student engagement, cultural sensitivity, etc.
- Should include current knowledge about financial aid rules, regulations and processes
- Should include ongoing, scheduled monthly meetings for advisement training
- Should include a training manual
- Should provide ready access to academic policies and procedures
- Should include shadowing with faculty member and/or more experienced advisor/success coach
- Should be linked to performance evaluation

Oversight

- Develop standard reports to provide Department Chairs, Program Directors with information about the progress and persistence of their students.
- STARFISH will provide documentation of advisors and their caseloads
- Establish benchmarks for student progress and degree completion

Maximizing STARFISH potential

- Advisors (using Starfish) have capacity to close/resolve flag when there is a clear positive outcome (following a referral for tutoring, student attends tutoring session)
- Everyone with an advisor function should use Starfish tracking items (flags, kudos, and referrals) and filtering capabilities to manage their caseload efficiently and meet established benchmarks

- STARFISH enables multiple advisors to document advice and track student response (it will be important to assure that everyone is documenting in STARFISH) to maximize results
- Advisor supervisors will use Starfish functionalities to assess the quality of advisement provided by their units and ensure attainment of benchmarks
- Academic Departments will ensure highest possible response by faculty when requested to respond to progress surveys

Functionalities assumed by Starfish
- Establish caseload
- Attendance records
- Maintain metrics about:
    o Types of meetings
    o Form of contact
    o Meeting reasons (Speed notes)
    o Outreach regarding faculty feedback (tracking items)
- Progress surveys
- Referrals to academic services

Calendar and Touchpoint – Discussion Topics

The following should serve as a focal point for developing a campus-wide consensus regarding advisement-related activities based upon students' class standing and according to the academic calendar.

Basic Advisement-Related Activities for Students Based on Class Standing

Pre-College ▪ Test prep workshops ▪ Freshman Orientations ▪ Career/Major Orientations
Lower Freshman (0-15 credits) ▪ Assess and affirm/change major program selection (Myers-Briggs Self-Assessment) ▪ Develop Personalize Degree Map ▪ Focus on completing (in sequence) all remedial requirements ▪ Focus on completing Gateway courses ▪ Acquiring good academic habits (use of resources, participation in co-curricular activities) ▪ Focus on engagement
Upper Freshman (16-30 credits) ▪ Focus on completing any remaining remedial & Gateway courses ▪ Focus on persistence and credit accumulation
Lower Sophomore (31-45 credits) ▪ Explore career and transfer options ▪ Experiential Learning (internships) ▪ Apply for Graduation (November for June/Sept for January)
Upper Sophomore (> 45 credits) Apply for jobs/transfer/scholarships

Academic Calendar and Advisement Protocols

The following table identifies the major academic events in each semester (changing program, verifying enrollment, submitting EAPR, mid-term and final grades, etc). The corresponding advisement related actions listed below are some examples. Developing a campus-wide consensus about what all advisors, faculty and student related actions should be – is the next step.

Dates (approximate)	Academic Event	Corresponding Advisement-Related Actions (examples)
August/January	☐ Last day to drop with 100% / 75% tuition ☐ Change of Program, Add/Change a course ☐ Financial Aid locked in (7th day of class)	☐ Advisors/Academic Departments review student schedules for appropriate courses and credits (relative to academic standing, grade changes, workshop performance)

	☐	ATB	☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)
	☐	Courses not in curriculum	☐ Resolve ATB issues
September/February	☐	Last day to drop with 50%/25% tuition	☐ Faculty track student attendance and submit attendance and/or alerts
	☐	Last day to change/declare a major	☐ Advisors/Students review and change/reaffirm majors
	☐	Verification of Enrollment rosters due (WN grades)	☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)
	☐		☐ Follow up with students receiving WN grades
(timeline may be reconsidered)	☐	Early Academic Progress Reports Completed	☐ Faculty submit flags
	☐		☐ Advisors assess flags/track student response
			☐ Students respond to flags
			☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)
October/March	☐	Mid-term Examinations	☐ Faculty submit grades and comments
	☐	Mid-term Grades	☐ Faculty submit tracking items (flags) in Starfish
	☐	Early registration	☐ Advisors assess flags/track student response
			☐ Students respond to flags
			☐ Advisors outreach to students who are experiencing academic difficulty to assess need for withdrawal and additional supports
			☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)
			☐ Outreach to students to register for following semester
November/April	☐	Last day to withdraw with a "W" grade	☐ Advisement (including assessment of academic & financial impact) for students withdrawing from classes
	☐	Last day to apply for graduation	☐ Alerts to students who are at risk of failing to consider official withdrawal from courses
			☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)
December/May	☐	Final Exams	☐ Review of final grades/academic standing – to make modifications to academic plans; develop appeal documentation (if needed)
	☐	Final Grades	☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)
	☐	SAP/Academic Standing Determined	

		☐ Advisors follow up with students who have not completed courses satisfactorily and adjust following semester registration. ☐ Advisors drop students from courses for which students don't meet requirements (clean up after final grades)
January/June-August	☐ Intersession/Summer Classes/Workshops ☐ Registration	☐ Reassessment of grades /registration status/ adjust degree maps ☐ Financial Aid/financial status identified/addressed if needed (focus on students with balances)

Study Participants

Academic Advisement Survey (n=8)
- Sent to all ASAP, CD, FYS, Academic Success Center, Transfer Services Advisors
- Number of Responses = 8
- Surveys sent to all advisors, with additional prompts from supervisors

In-depth Interviews and Focus Groups

- All members of the Academic Advisement Committee, All Academic Department Chairpersons and All Supervisors of Academic Advisors invited to attend focus groups. Supervisors of Academic Advisors were interviewed individually (or as a group).

Participants in Interviews and Focus Groups (n=18)

- Octavio Melendez, Academic Success Center
- Tica Fraser, First Year Program
- Javier Legasa, ASAP/First Year Program
- Nadine Browne, ASAP
- Melanie Robles, ASAP
- Jessica Cabrera, ASAP
- Aysmel Aguasvivas, ASAP
- Debra Gonsher, Communications Department Chairperson
- Howard Clampman, Business and Information Systems Chairperson)
- Bernard Gantt, Dean of Academic Services
- Cynthia Suarez, College Discovery
- Stephen Powers, Education and Reading/Chairperson Academic Standing Committee
- Cheryl Byrd, Academic Success Center
- Mervin Agovic, Biologic Sciences
- Gerard Cole, College Discovery
- Aysmel Aguasvivas, ASAP
- Maria Psarelli, Math Department Chairperson
- Tamar Rothenberg, History Department Chairperson

Discussion at Academic Advisement Meeting

(Study discussed at an Academic Advisement Meeting. See list of members below).

Groups Invited to Focus Group Sessions

Academic Advisement Committee
Bernard Gantt
Edwin Roman
Victor Rodriguez
Stephen Duncan
Kevin Bozelka
Roni Ben-nun
John Molina
Ellen Hoist
Jean Shaddai
Evangelia Antonakos
Delia Wallace
Abdul Hashim
Octavio Melendez
Giulia Guarnieri
Chris Efthimiou
Francisco Legasa
Clifford Marshall
Monika Sikand
Elizabeth Payamps
Gerard Cole
Devin T. Molina
Mervan Agovic
Cynthia Suarez-Espinal
Alexander Ott
Sharon Utakis
George Patchoros
Ulana Lysniak
Kathrynn Ditommaso
Wilma Rosario-Torres
Denise Comara
Cheryl Byrd
Jean Didier Yao
Aysmel C. Aguasvivas

Department Chairpersons
Ruth Bass
Charles Maliti
Howard Clampman
Neal Phillip
Debra Gonsher
George Sanchez

Robert Beuka
Janet Heller
Tamar Rothenberg
Michael Miller
Maria Psarelli
Alexander Lamazares
Kenya Harris
Jalil Moghaddasi
Donna Mangiante-Naughton