

Troy University Academic Advising Survey

Executive Summary

June 16, 2008

In Spring 2008, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness conducted a University-wide survey of academic advising. This was the second year that the University had conducted this survey. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the academic advising process at the University to identify the strengths as well as the priorities for improvement in academic advising in order to better serve the educational needs of the students.

The survey instrument was locally developed and piloted on the Dothan Campus in 2005, and revised based on the extensive feedback from various constituents at the University, especially from the University's Academic Advising Committee. The questions of the survey, found to have a high reliability, centered on measuring the academic advising process at Troy University, specifically, student perceptions about the academic advising process at the University, student perceived importance of academic advising, and student satisfaction with the academic advising they had experienced at Troy University.

The survey was administered online and sent to all 28,751 students enrolled in the Spring 2008 semester. Students were invited to participate via email on April 28, 2008 and 35 days later the survey closed on June 2, 2008. Two follow-up emails were sent to non-respondents resulting in a total of 6099 responses. This is up from the 3866 responses received in 2007. The participation rate for the 2008 survey was 21% which is up from a 15% participation rate from the prior year.

In data analysis, descriptive methods were used to identify students' opinions and perceptions about the academic advising they had experienced. Additionally, in order to determine if there were any gaps between the student expectations and the performance of the University in terms of academic advising, students' perceived importance of academic advising was measured against their satisfaction with the academic advising at the University. Finally, a quadrant analysis was applied to identify areas of top priorities for improvement.

Major findings

1. Overall, over half (55.4%) of the students preferred face-to-face academic advising, while about one-third (31%) would like to have online academic advising. Although the majority of the eCampus students preferred academic advising either online (50.3%) or by phone (19.9%), quite a large percent of them (27.2%) preferred face-to-face academic advising.

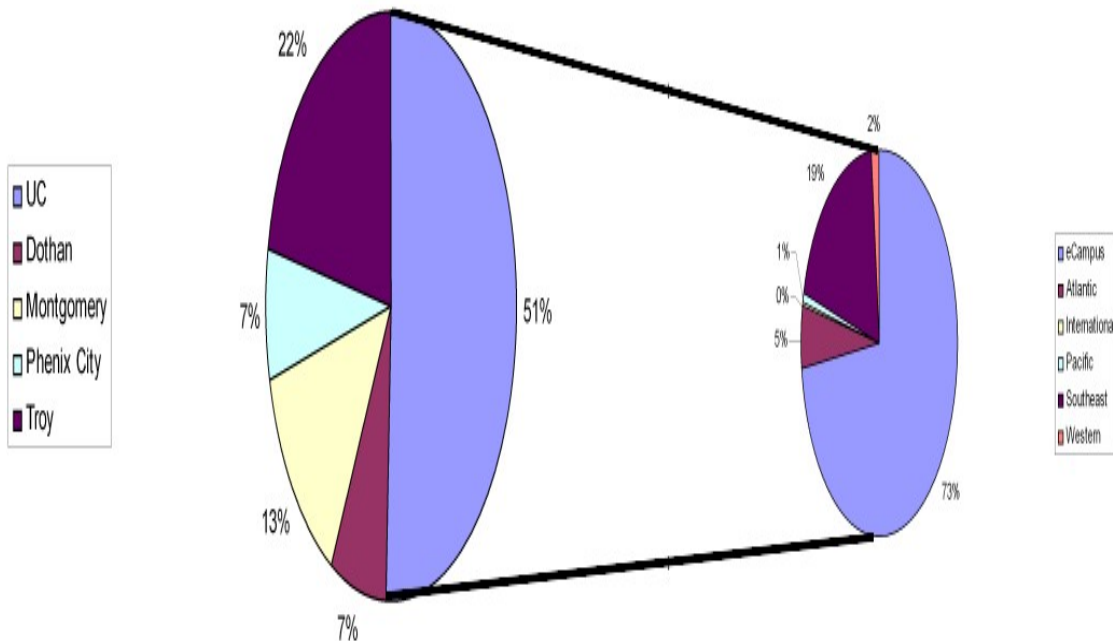
2. 71.5% of the students indicated that they knew their academic advisors, while about two-thirds (65%) agreed that an academic advisor was assigned to them soon after they declared their majors.
3. Over half of the students (54.8%) indicated that they would like to consult with an advisor on a regular basis, preferably 1-2 time or 3-4 times each term, though currently 38.4% consulted with their advisors 1-2 times or 3-4 time each term and 54.2% met with their advisors only when it was necessary.
4. Student opinions about the academic advising at Troy University were relatively low, with around 52% of the respondents showing their agreement to the areas measured (Table 1). Only four statements regarding academic advising at the University received the ratings of "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" by close to 60% of the respondents:
 - My advisor is knowledgeable about campus/site academic support services and resources. (59%)
 - My advisor provides accurate info about my major and my program requirements. (59%)
 - My advisor respects his/her students and is interested in them as individuals. (59%)
 - I feel comfortable working with my advisor. (60%)
5. About 20% of the respondents "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed" with the following:
 - The academic advising process at Troy University adequately meets my needs. (20%)
 - Overall, I am satisfied with the academic advising provided by my advisor. (19%)
6. Students of Communication & Fine Arts and Health & Human Services were found to be more likely to show high level of agreement and satisfaction with the areas of academic advising measured in the survey (Table 3 and Table 5).
7. College of Business students were found less satisfied with the academic advising they experienced at Troy University: they tended to agree less to the statements regarding academic advising (Table 3) and their satisfaction ratings were significantly lower than the average ratings of all respondents (Table 5).
8. There was not much difference between students of different gender, ethnical background, or students of different academic level in their agreement to the areas measured. However, eCampus students were found more likely than average to show low level of agreement, and part-time students tended to agree less to the areas measured in the survey.
9. While all respondents shared about the same opinions about the importance of academic advising, "Guidance on academic programs" was rated as the most

important area in academic advising, and advising on “Using campus/site services and recourses” was rated as the least important. (Table 4). This remained unchanged from 2007.

10. Overall, student satisfaction ratings were low. In a 7-point scale, with 0 as “Least Satisfied” and 6 as “Most Satisfied,” “Scheduling classes” was rated as the highest (mean=3.78) and “Career planning” was rated the lowest (mean=3.46). (Table 4)
11. Significant differences were identified between students’ perceived importance of academic advising and their satisfaction with the academic advising they experienced, indicating that the University’s performance did not meet the students’ expectations in terms of academic advising. (Table 6)
12. “Guidance on academic programs,” “Registration procedures,” “Scheduling classes,” and “Career Planning” were identified as the top priorities for improvement in the academic advising process at Troy University.
13. Results from the 2008 study were very similar to those of the 2007 study. It should be noted that in 2007 the seven-point scale was calculated as one to seven while in 2008 it was calculated as zero to six. One should take note of this if comparing means between years.

Respondent demographics:

1. Of the 6,099 respondents, 66.6% were females; 50.8% were White, and 39.9% were Black..
2. 69% of the respondents were Undergraduates and 31% were Graduate students, while almost two-thirds (59.2%) enrolled as full-time students.
3. 33.4% of the respondents were Business students, 28% from College of Arts and Sciences, 21.6% were of Education majors, and a small percentage were Colleges of Fine Arts and Communication and Health and Human Services students, 1.7% and 8.8% respectively.
4. 48.9% of the respondents were in-state campus students and 51.1% were University College students, including eCampus students, who comprised over one-third (36.4%) of the total respondents.



Implications:

1. Troy University has been implementing a regular and consistent academic advising process to help students grow and achieve their educational/academic goals.
2. From this academic advising process, students have benefited. However, there is still much room for improvement.
3. Detailed work should be done to make sure that all students have academic advising while they are studying at the University. This should be established as division or program objective in the annual outcome assessment.
4. Work implemented in different academic divisions seems to have considerable impact on the students' opinions about the academic advising process as well as on their satisfaction with the academic advising at the University. Colleges, departments, and programs should review their academic advising process carefully, identify problems, and find the best ways possible to serve the needs of the students.
5. More efforts may need to be directed at improving the University's academic advising process in order to better serve the students' needs, considering that the survey found the University's performance did not meet the student expectations.
6. "Guidance on academic programs," advising on "Scheduling classes," "Career Planning," and "Registration procedures" are of high importance to the students and should always bear high priorities in the implementation of the University's academic advising process.