Resolving Ambiguity in Advising:
Exploring Leaders' Perceptions of the
Purposes, Outcomes, and Functions of
Academic Advising

Mark Paul Duslak
Mark Duslak defended this dissertation on February 3, 2021.
The members of the supervisory committee were:

Toby J Park-Gaghan
Professor Directing Dissertation

John Meyers
University Representative

Bradley Cox
Committee Member

Patrice Iatarola
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.
This dissertation is dedicated to the work of my parents and teachers which gave me the foundation I have; the support Nikki, Amber, Colin, and my other friends give me today; and the future Avery and Julia will give me tomorrow.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the problem of trying to remember everyone who helped me get to this moment. This journey began almost ten years ago with a short conversation with my principal, Richard Hampton, who said that I should consider going into administration and my wife, Nikki, who promptly told me to “go for it”. I would like to acknowledge them both for setting my career and educational trajectories into motion.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Brett Geier and Dr. Craig McGill for inspiring me and challenging me to pursue presenting and publishing my research. Those early publications gave me the confidence to pursue a doctorate. Dr. McGill is also responsible for introducing me to the wonderful minds at NACADA, and for connecting me to many exciting projects. Dr. Drew Puroway has also been an invaluable friend and research partner. His compassion and kindness are unmatched. Throughout this process, these incredible individuals have challenged me to refine my thinking and supported my growth as a scholar. They fully supported this pursuit, and I have been inspired by their own journeys toward attaining a doctorate.

Anxiety accompanies starting any endeavor of this magnitude. I am grateful to my fellow cohort members for supporting each other throughout this journey. Their humor, kindness, and reassurances fueled me through the more challenging times. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Nikki and my friends Colin and Amber for helping me gain perspective and find the perseverance to see this to the finish. I am fortunate to have them as editors, coaches, and, most of all, friends. My parents-in-law, Chuck and Robin, also supported me during every step of this journey. Avery and Julia, my two fascinating children, kept me grounded and taught me about the importance of giving time to others.

From the beginning of this program, my dissertation chair, Dr. Toby Park-Gaghan, has been an outstanding mentor. His compassion for doctoral students and dedication to making earning a doctorate a positive learning experience defines why he is an exceptional educator. Along with Dr. Park-Gaghan, I acknowledge my dissertation committee, Dr. Meyers, Dr. Cox, and Dr. Iatarola, for helping me focus my initial prospectus and for helping me create the best possible realization of this dissertation. This refinement ultimately helped me develop this work of which I am tremendously proud.

My extended family, Rick, Juan, Dena, Earl, Lindsay, Tom, Frank, and Dawn helped me navigate some of the most difficult parts of my life during this journey. I owe them a debt of gratitude for their love and support. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge my late parents, Robert and Barbara Duslak, for providing the upbringing that helped me develop a love of learning. From my mom’s gardening tips to my dad’s consistent answer that any problem can be solved by a visit to the library, I owe my curious mind to them making the time for me to explore. As my dad stated in a note to my mom decades ago, I am proud to be the “comet that entered their lives.”
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... vi
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... vii
Abstract ..................................................................................................................................... viii

1. POP, PURPOSE, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................. 1

2. BACKGROUND ANALYSIS ............................................................................................... 9

3. INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH ............................................................................................ 29

4. FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & DISSEMINATION PLAN .......... 40

APPENDICES ........................................................................................................................... 68

A. NACADA ACADEMIC ADVISING CORE COMPETENCIES MODEL ....................... 68
B. NACADA CORE VALUES OF ACADEMIC ADVISING .............................................. 69
C. IRB APPROVAL ................................................................................................................. 70
D. SURVEY INSTRUMENT ...................................................................................................... 71
E. FIGURES ............................................................................................................................. 77
E. TABLES ............................................................................................................................... 78

References ............................................................................................................................... 89

Biographical Sketch ............................................................................................................... 98
# LIST OF TABLES

1. Item-Level Data Analysis ..............................................................................................................34
2. Population/Sample Analysis ...........................................................................................................78
3. Responses Relating to the Purpose of Academic Advising .......................................................79
4. Verbs to Describe Advising .........................................................................................................80
5. Responses Relating to the Outcomes of Academic Advising ....................................................81
6. Single Outcomes Ranking for the Role of Academic Advising ................................................82
7. Responses Relating to the Functions of Academic Advising .....................................................83
8. Duties Outside of Academic Advising ..........................................................................................84
9. Responses Relating to the External Factors Influencing Administrators’ Views of the Role of the Academic Advisor ........................................................................................................85
10. Responses Relating to the Barriers Influencing Administrators’ Views of the Role of the Academic Advisor ..................................................................................................................................................86
11. Career Analogues to Academic Advising ...................................................................................87
12. Minimum Education Required to Practice Academic Advising ..............................................87
13. Should Advisors Be Required to Possess Certification to Practice ........................................88
LIST OF FIGURES

1 Population Versus Sample Comparison for Performance-Based Funding .........................77

2 Population Versus Sample Comparison of Urbanicity .........................................................77
ABSTRACT

Academic advising has been a recognized field of work for well over 50 years. Yet, debates continue about its status as a profession. To date, administrator perceptions of the role (purposes, outcomes, and functions) of academic advising have not been extensively studied. This dissertation reflected a study of administrators within the Florida College System with the purpose of understanding how administrator views of the role of academic advising relate to what is espoused in publications from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. Additionally, this dissertation explored how institutional characteristics relate to the administrators’ views. Findings indicated that administrators’ top purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising were related to generating positive academic outcomes, namely retention and completion. Some institutional characteristics were related to subtle differences regarding administrators’ views of the role of academic advising. More sophisticated and professionalized aspects of the role of the academic advisor were not as highly prioritized. This indicates a disparity between what NACADA communicates to be the role of the advisor and the beliefs of administrators.
CHAPTER 1

POP, PURPOSE, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Only three out of every ten community college students graduate with a certificate or associates degree within three years (Hussar et al., 2020). Subsequently, many calls to reform community colleges to increase student persistence and completion have occurred in the past decade (Bailey et al., 2015). One promising finding related to student academic performance in community colleges indicated that academic advisors play an important role in positively influencing the persistence and completion of students throughout their college experience (Drake, 2011). “Academic advising applies knowledge of the field to empower students and campus and community members to successfully navigate academic interactions related to higher education” (Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2018, p.86). However, many outside of this space do not know what academic advisors do. Despite the importance of the role of the academic advisor, a unified definition of the field in higher education continues to be elusive (Aiken-Wisniewski, Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015). This lack of a unified understanding of the role of academic advising leads to a lack of standardization of academic advising practice (Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015). Subsequently, the student experience with advising differs—in potentially inequitable ways (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015).

Within this study, the term role is used to encompass purpose (why tasks and duties are performed), outcomes (what occurs as a result of the tasks), and function (the specific tasks and duties performed) within the work defined as academic advising. Additionally, the terms academic advising and advising along with academic advisor and advisor will be used interchangeably. Lastly, the terms administrator, leader, and upper-level administrator and executive-level administrator will be used interchangeably. In the advising literature, the term administrator is not always clearly defined. For example, is the administrator a direct supervisor to an advisor, or are they more organizationally removed? Within the context of the study conducted, the term administrator refers to the leader within the college that is one level removed from the chief executive officer (often president) of the college who has academic advisors within their reporting line.
Fully mapping how the role of the academic advisor is formed was too broad for the scope of one study. The focus of this research was to understand the part that administrators of advisors play in shaping the role of academic advisors. The goal of this study was to identify the level of congruence between administrators’ views of the role of academic advising and the established normative role of academic advising as established by NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA). Additionally, this study explored whether contributing institutional factors related to administrators’ perceptions of the role of academic advisors. Only one study, by Smith (2013), directly explored administrator's views of the role of advising by analyzing a survey administered by NACADA. This study found that administrators held a variety of perspectives regarding the most important roles of academic advisors.

Alongside knowledge of the field of advising, the administrator’s belief in the professional status of academic advising could influence an administrator's view of the role of advising. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the field of academic advising is still establishing itself as a profession (McGill, 2018; Shaffer, Zalewski, & Leveille, 2010). Some posit this lack of professional status leads to a decrease in resource allocation (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015), a lack of respect for the role of academic advisor, and ultimately may contribute to burnout in the field (Rubin, 2017). Lastly, institutional pressures can impact the practice of academic advisors. For example, a study by Bridgen (2017) illustrated that the pressures to increase enrollment led to administrators promoting advisor behaviors that centered on increasing retention, while the “advisors considered these functions as byproducts of good advising rather than as the primary purposes of advising” (p. 14).

Finally, institutional characteristics might influence how administrators conceptualize the role of the academic advisor. As such, it is important to study a diverse set of institutions. The Florida College System (FCS), previously known as the Florida Community College System, meets this criterion. The FCS is particularly well-suited for this study because of the diversity of the institutions in the system and level of governmental influence over institutional policy. Recent sweeping legislative actions have influenced practices at FCS institutions. Two such actions particularly relevant to advising are the Performance Based Funding Model and additional legislation that changed how developmental education is taught and for whom it is required (Senate Bill 1720).
Both legislative actions likely influence administrators’ decisions, which impacts academic advising practices. A study of leaders in the FCS found that leaders’ programmatic responses to state-level policies vary (Park, Tandberg, Hu, & Hankerson, 2016). Additionally, Bridgen (2017) demonstrated that the systematic interaction of policy and program decisions can lead to a misalignment of the goals of advising practices with the mission of the advising program. Taken in total, the FCS is a suitable context of study given the variety of institutional characteristics, the influence of government on institutional policy and practice, and the noted diverse institutional responses to legislative action.

**Purpose, Research Questions, and Study Design Overview**

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) was to understand the alignment of administrator perceptions of the role of academic advisors and the normative role of academic advising as defined by NACADA. Furthermore, this study sought to understand whether institutional characteristics serve as moderating variables in the alignment. Lastly, this study explored administrators’ perceptions about the external actors and barriers that potentially shaped the role of the academic advisors at their institutions. The normative roles of academic advising were derived from the *Core Values of Academic Advising* (NACADA, 2017b), the *Core Competencies of Academic Advisors* (NACADA, 2017a), and extant scholarship about the purposes (NACADA, 2003; Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2019), outcomes (NACADA, 2006, Powers, Carlstrom, & Hughey, 2014; Zarges, Adams, Higgins, & Muhovich, 2018), and functions (Huber & Miller, 2013) of academic advising. In addition to original survey data, the data for this dissertation also include institutional characteristics obtained from the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and the FCS Fact Books. Additionally, the administrators’ perceptions were measured by their responses to an online survey.

**Research Questions**

My research questions represent an inquiry into the factors which shape administrators’ decision-making about the academic advising program. By using extant scholarship as a proxy
for the normative roles of academic advisors, I sought to answer the following primary research question:

(1) What is the degree of alignment between upper-level higher education administrators’ perceptions of academic advising roles and the normative roles of academic advisors? The following sub-questions sought to answer the relationship between potentially moderating variables relating to administrator perceptions of the roles of academic advisors:

(2) Does this alignment vary by institutional characteristics of enrollment size, urbanicity, percentage of non-traditional aged students, performance-funding award status, and the number of NACADA members at the institution?

(3) What external actors, barriers, job analogues, minimum education requirements, and future certification requirements do administrators identify in the context of the role of academic advisors at their institution?

Study Design

This DiP is an exploratory study that investigated the interplay of policy, setting, and leaders’ beliefs upon the role definition of academic advising. An exploratory model of study is designed to investigate a problem of practice and offer potential solutions (Florida State University, 2018). This is the appropriate model because there is no universally established policy and practice governing academic advising. Additionally, the introduction of performance-based funding is relatively new (2015) and the scholarship of advising continues to create or revise the definitions of the role of the academic advisor. A survey of executive-level administrators with a supervisory line to academic advising using items derived from extant scholarship about the role of the academic advisor was used as the main data source, along with data from IPEDS and the FCS. The participants in this study were identified through an email solicitation that used the mailing list of administrators maintained by the FCS.

Study Site Overview and Feasibility

The context of this study encompasses the field of academic advising within the FCS. This next section will explore aspects of this context in terms of its relevance to this study. The primary stakeholders in this study are the students, advisors, and executive-level administrators in the FCS. The secondary-level stakeholders in this study are the other service providers in
each institution of the FCS, as well as the Florida Department of Education’s Council of Student Affairs (FLDOECSA). Finally, the tertiary-level stakeholders are the global community of academic advisors, as the findings from this study could inform the entire field. The interaction of these stakeholders will be further outlined in this section. From there, this section will address the feasibility of this study by outlining the logistics of carrying out the study and the actions taken up to this point to establish stakeholder buy-in for this study.

NACADA

NACADA is the leading professional organization of academic advisors. NACADA was formed in 1979 with under 300 members. It now boasts over 10,000 members globally. The organization is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of a President, Vice President, seven elected directors, and an Executive Director. NACADA is managed by an executive office of over 20 individuals. The organizational structure of NACADA is composed of three main divisions (Administration, Regional, and Advising Communities), a Research Center, and task forces. The three divisions oversee a host of advisory boards, committees, 10 regions, 43 advising communities, and two journal editorial boards (NACADA, n.d.).

NACADA offers a variety of publication venues to educate others and promote the advancement of academic advising. They include: two scholarly journals (NACADA Journal and NACADA Review); numerous full-length texts addressing advising practice, assessment, administration, and training and development (e.g. Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013; Joslin & Markee, 2011); member-written articles (the Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources); a quarterly electronic publication (Academic Advising Today); research resources through the Research Center; email listservs; consultants and speakers; and guiding documents (the Pillars of Academic Advising). Through these publication venues, NACADA has asserted itself as the foremost authority in defining and shaping academic advising (NACADA, 2019).

The Florida College System

The Florida College System, previously known as the Florida Community College System, consists of 28 colleges. According to the FCS Factbook (2019), the system covers 68 campuses which served 733,080 students and awarded 112,536 degrees and certificates in the 2017-2018 academic year. There are 45,179 employees in the FCS, of which 20,943 are faculty.
Recent sweeping legislative actions likely have reshaped the practice and priorities of academic advising. Of importance to my problem of practice are Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) and the Florida Performance Funding Model. SB 1720, enacted in 2013, eliminated the developmental education requirement for a significant population of students and mandated entrance counseling for students and enhanced student support services (e.g., tutoring, computer labs). This bill significantly impacted how students were academically advised and enabled students to take introductory college-level courses regardless of their prior academic preparation (Hu et al., 2016). The Florida Performance Funding Model, enacted in 2016, tied a portion of state funding for colleges to metrics related to retention, completion, wages, and employment/continuing education. Taken together, these two pieces of legislation significantly changed the purpose, function, and landscape of academic advising in the FCS by creating a new set of student challenges and a new set of political pressures to reach performance funding metrics.

Developmental education reform in Florida mandated colleges to offer academic advising for all incoming students (Woods et al., 2017). Colleges have programmatically responded to this mandate in different ways (Park et al., 2016). Woods et al. (2017) found that only half of FCS institutions increased the types of advising offered, and less than one third increased the amount of advising offered. A majority of administrators in the FCS expressed that advisors did not have ample time to meet with students and that they did not have sufficient staff to meet the advising needs of the students (Woods et al., 2017). Taken together, this suggests that SB 1720 caused an increase in the demand for academic advising by mandating advising, but that increase in demand was not met with an equivalent increase in advising resources. This likely reduced the time and frequency with which an advisor could interact with a given student, potentially decreasing the effectiveness of the advising session by hindering the creation of a student-advisor relationship (Karp & Stacey, 2013). Additionally, this policy potentially shaped administrators’ perceptions of the role of academic advisors by prioritizing meeting statutory requirements.

Performance-based funding can lead to equity concerns by reinforcing institutional practices that dissuade minority students, students with disabilities, and low-income students from enrolling (Oratagus, Kelchen, Rosinger, & Voorhes, 2020). Additionally, performance-based funding models that reward short-term certificates (such as the one in the FCS) may cause advisors to steer students toward completing these certificates in place of more substantial degree
attainment. Unfortunately, these short-term certificates have been demonstrated to have little impact on student wages or employment (Oratagus et al., 2020). Thus, performance-based funding may shape the role of the advisor toward recommending certificate programs even when those recommendations to not appear to improve student employment outcomes.

**Feasibility**

An online survey was used as the primary tool for collecting the data for this study. There are 28 colleges in the FCS; therefore, I sought to access 28 executive-level administrators. Access to these individuals was the primary challenge to the feasibility of this study. Administrators in general have a limited amount of time, so accessing this time proved to be challenging. However, my communications with key stakeholders in the FLDOE FCS (namely the Vice Chancellor of the FCS and the Director of Academic and Student Affairs) provided me with inroads to access the executive-level administrators of the FCS institutions. The executive-level administrator overseeing academic advising was contacted directly by me when responses were not returned.

Members of the executive office of the FCS at the time have expressed interest in further understanding academic advising in the context of its institutions (Dr. K. Barrett, personal communication, February 22, 2019). The purpose of this study aligns with these goals. At an individual site level, there has been an expressed interest in this information as well. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the execution of this study, as well as the reporting of the findings, will be welcomed at both a site and system level.

**Significance**

The executive-level administrators’ perceptions of the role of academic advising ultimately shape the advising services students receive. Numerous studies support the positive relationship between student academic achievement (e.g. grade point average, persistence, and completion) and academic advising (Bai & Pan, 2009; Kot, 2014; Metzner, 1989; Robbins et al., 2009; Swecker et al., 2013). In the FCS, academic advising is gaining attention—largely as a result of this finding earning system-wide recognition and the performance funding initiative rewarding institutions for increasing student retention and completion. Despite increased attention, the focus of this attention stems from the outcomes of advising and does not provide
much additional dialogue regarding the practice of academic advising. It would be equivalent to K-12 administrators lauding student academic success as a product of teaching but then neglecting to focus on the pedagogy involved.

The findings of this study stand to benefit academic advisors by providing insights to how administrators view the role of their work. Developing this understanding would inform the conversation between advisors and administrators. Additionally, these findings would contribute to a uniform understanding between the service providers (advisors) and those who shape the broader goals of the advising program (executive-level administrators). Ultimately, this understanding will benefit students by advancing the creation of purposes, outcomes, and functions of advising programs that align with the normative recommendations espoused by NACADA.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to explore executive-level administrator perceptions of the roles of academic advising for advisors in the FCS. This understanding will contribute to the ongoing broader conversation surrounding the alignment of normative roles of academic advising with site-level practices in the FCS. This study accomplished this exploration through an exploratory study design. Data was generated through the distribution of a survey to executive-level administrators at each of the 28 institutions that comprise the FCS. This data was analyzed to understand the degree of alignment between the administrator’s perceptions and the normative recommendations of the role of academic advising. Additional analysis specific to site-level characteristics (i.e. institutional size) informed whether these characteristics are related to differing administrative views of the role of academic advising. Conclusions were drawn and suggestions for programmatic improvement were made based on the results of the analysis.

Chapter 2 of this DiP will outline the background analysis of this problem of practice. Namely, the chapter will outline how this study orients to the broader educational landscape, explain how previous studies have explored portions of this problem, and supply a more in-depth explanation of the local context of this study. Chapter 3 of this DiP will enumerate the study type, research design, and limitations of the study. Finally, chapter 4 of this DiP will establish the findings, recommendations, and conclusions from the study.
CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUNDS ANALYSIS

In this background analysis, I will begin by providing support for my problem of practice by outlining its orientation within the larger educational landscape. This section will address the ambiguity of the profession of academic advising and issues of equity of student service in academic advising. Next, this chapter will provide a review of previous studies relating to how the role of academic advising has developed and evolved, the status of academic advising as a profession, empirically-supported models of academic advising, the connection between academic advising and student outcomes, advising in community colleges, and administrative decision making as it relates to policy interpretation at the local level. Finally, this background analysis will describe the local context of advising in the FCS and will explain the contribution of this DiP to the communities of higher education and academic advising.

The practice of academic advising in higher education is positively related to student academic performance (e.g. Kot, 2014; Swecker, Fifolt, & Searby, 2013). However, a precise definition of the role of this practice remains absent—even after decades of contributions from the leading professional organization of academic advisors, NACADA (previously the National Academic Advising Association [NACADA]).

Despite robust support for the relationship between academic advising and positive student academic outcomes (e.g. Kot, 2014), the field of academic advising has been understudied (Habley, 2009; Shaffer et al., 2010). Habley (2009) measured the scholarship and research related to academic advising by noting the number of articles that appeared with the keywords “academic advising” during the time periods of 1965-89, 1981-89, 1990-99, and 2000-08. While the instances of those keywords increased over time, especially from 1990-99 (47 in-text mentions) to 2000-2008 (386 in-text mentions), Habley (2009) noted that the in-text mentions for other related fields were far higher (i.e. 4,668 for student development during the years 2000-08). This led Habley (2009) to conclude, “Advising still has some distance to travel before one can claim it on equal footing with other areas of higher education inquiry” (p. 80). This lack of empirical inquiry and subsequent knowledge base has been attributed to the field’s struggle to attain recognition as a profession (Habley, 2009; Shaffer et al., 2010). The research
community has made numerous calls for empirical inquiry into academic advising (Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, & Troxel, 2010; Habley, 2009; Kot, 2014; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008; Shaffer et al., 2010), specifically studies exploring administrator perceptions of academic advising’s role (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Bridgen, 2017; Johnson et al., 2015; Smith, 2013).

Administrators often hold differing views of the main purposes and outcomes of advising (Florida College System Council of Student Affairs, 2018; Smith, 2013). Administrators are tasked with translating policy goals into programmatic decisions in their local context. The systematic interaction of policy and programmatic decisions can lead to a misalignment of the goals of advising practices with the mission of the advising program (Bridgen, 2017). In the Florida College System (FCS), responses to legislation specifically impacting advising practices have yielded mixed programmatic decisions from administrators (Park et al., 2016). Given the power of administrators to make programmatic decisions that influence academic advising practices, it is important to understand their perceptions of the purposes and functions of academic advising so that misaligned perceptions that might negatively impact student success can be identified and corrected.

As such, this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) focuses on a key aspect of academic advising: the role executive-level administrators play in defining the role of academic advising at their home institutions. More specifically, the purpose of this DiP is to understand the relationship between administrator perceptions of the role of academic advisors and the normative role of academic advising as defined by NACADA.

**Orientation Within the Larger Educational Landscape**

Academic advising in postsecondary education began in the early nineteenth century as a practice of helping students construct educational plans in personalized programs of study (Cook, 2013). Faculty members were viewed as experts who would help students craft their customized curriculum of study. In the 1920s, as curriculums became less flexible, the advisors’ job became more clerical—essentially serving informational purposes and checking students’ progress (Cook, 2013). This is defined as *prescriptive advising* and emphasizes the advisor as an authority who presents information to the student in a one-way interaction (Crookston, 1972).
It was not until about 1960 that advising began to form as a “defined and explored activity” (Cook, 2013, p. 22). In the 1960s, staff advisors began to appear in addition to faculty advisors. Two seminal articles by Crookston (1972) and O’Banion (1972) laid the “philosophical groundwork” of advising (McGill, 2018, p.88). This highlighted an approach to advising that emphasized student psychosocial development (White & Schulenberg, 2012). This is defined as developmental advising and emphasizes providing services which are developmentally appropriate for the student (Crookston, 1972). NACADA formed as an organization in 1979, and the NACADA Journal was first published in 1981 (NACADA, 2004).

For many decades, the prescriptive/developmental spectrum remained the predominant model of academic advising. This was called into question by Lowenstein (1999) who regarded it as a false dichotomy that overemphasized the psychological aspects of academic advising and downplayed the academic nature of the advisor-student interaction. This was further developed in an official delineation of a theory of advising as integrative learning. According to this theory, the main purpose of advising is student learning in an academic context rather than an informational transaction (prescriptive) or the multifaceted development of the advisee (developmental) (Lowenstein, 2014). Additional theories and definitions of academic advising are emerging regularly; (e.g. Larson et al., 2019) however, there has been a recent, concerted effort by NACADA to identify the core aspects of academic advising (e.g. NACADA, 2017a). These core aspects support a general understanding of academic advising’s role.

At present, what constitutes academic advising differs both within and among institutions (McGill, 2019). Further, this practice has different names, such as academic coaching, counseling, and mentoring (McWilliams & Beam, 2013). Lastly, the occupational status of academic advising differs across campuses—some regard it as a profession akin to college instruction, while others regard it as a para-profession with tasks slightly elevated above those of a secretary (Habley, 2009). Despite differences in what it is called, how it operates, or its level of prestige, it is well established that academic advising is important for college student success (Light, 2004; Tinto, 1987). Nonetheless, these differences can impact the service students receive, potentially in inequitable ways (Bridgen, 2017).

Academic advising faces the challenge of being a field of work that has not yet fully reached the recognition of a profession (Shaffer et al., 2010). This ambiguity contributes to a variety of interpretations of the role of the academic advisor and the status of the academic
advisor on a college campus (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). As a result, there are vastly different purposes and functions of academic advisors across college campuses and departments, and advisors are given differing levels of professional freedom and influence in their practice. Consequently, the student is presented with markedly different advising experiences depending on which college (and even which campus or department) they choose. This could be problematic because providing starkly different services can be confusing, and, at worst, potentially detrimental to the student’s academic achievement (Bridgen, 2017).

**Ambiguity of the Profession of Academic Advising**

There are differences in academic advising both across and within institutions of higher education, as a lack of a universal definition affords significant latitude to the individual institution in defining advising (Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012). These variations include its status, divisional organization, and perceived relevance on a college campus (Larson et al., 2019a). The role of an academic advisor varies across practitioners in the field and also within institutions, leading to differing arrangements of advising departments (i.e. centralized vs. decentralized; faculty vs. primary-role advisors), advising modalities, session goals, and contributions to the institution (Habley et al., 2012). Minor variations of advising services are inevitable due to institutional characteristics and differences in advisor personalities and preferences. However, when those variations are significant, students receive starkly different services under the label of academic advising (Karp & Stacey, 2013). These inconsistencies can result in different experiences for different students, lead to student confusion, and make researching effective advising difficult (Karp & Stacey, 2013; Larson et al., 2019a).

**Campus Status.** There is a lack of consensus across institutions of higher education in the United States about the appropriate departmental ownership of academic advising. For example, should academic advising report through Academic Affairs or Student Affairs? In a survey of almost 1,400 institutions, 42% reported that institutional ownership of academic advising is uncertain (Bryant, Seaman, Java, & Martin, 2017). While this was an improvement over the previous year’s survey, it is still a large proportion of institutions. Oversight and standardization of academic advising at an institutional level is difficult to achieve without definitive ownership.
The level of prestige and respect given to academic advising varies widely across campuses as well. Advising is a “peripheral and clerical duty” on many campuses (Habley, 2009, p. 83). In many cases, advisors feel a need to legitimize their profession to others (McGill, 2018). In a study involving a focus group of 47 advisors attending a NACADA regional conference, Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2015) reported that academic advisors “feel demoralized because many administrators, department chairs, and students have no idea [sic] the academic advisor’s roles, responsibilities, and daily work life” (p.65). Depending on the campus, advisors range from being treated as respected professionals who are afforded the appropriate latitude and decision-making capabilities to para-professional schedule-makers without a definitive home on their campus. Advisors can contribute valuable information to college administration by virtue of having such frequent student contact (Huber & Miller, 2013; McGill, 2018). However, some leaders within NACADA reported that advising is not appreciated at that level on many campuses (McGill, 2018).

**Role Ambiguity.** “Managers who want their employees to have positive attitudes and to work to achieve organisational goals should be very concerned with their employees’ perceptions of how well their work roles are defined” (Curran & Prottas, 2017, p. 652). There are a wide variety of job duties, responsibilities, titles, and goals across campuses that all fall under the job description of academic advising (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). The purpose and function of academic advising differs across and within campuses, leading some advisors to feel their practice does not take full advantage of their skills and knowledge (Johnson et al., 2015). Even on one campus, differences in the role of the academic advisor can exist. For example, Bridgen (2017) identified divergent beliefs about the purposes and functions of academic advising across the campus community in a qualitative exploration of his home institution. Active use of standards of advising was not often required at most institutions studied (Donnelly, 2004).

Academic advisors often do not have a unified understanding of the role of academic advising (Habley et al., 2012). Advisors arrive in the career from a variety of backgrounds and lack the formal pre-training that one experiences in a matured professional field (Justyna, 2014). Diversity of advisor backgrounds adds to the diversity of the profession, but it also makes defining the profession difficult (McGill, 2018; Menke, Stuck, & Ackerson, 2018). Subsequently, academic advisors have difficulty describing the nature of academic advising.
clearly (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). In a more scathing rebuke, one study found that academic advisors frequently offered conflicting suggestions to students, leading students to lose trust in advising (Karp & Stacey, 2013).

The field of advising has also changed its roles over time (McGill, 2018). Recent advances in technology have replaced some of the more clerical aspects of academic advising (such as scheduling and degree auditing). Some believe technology could eventually make academic advising obsolete—although the prevailing wisdom is that the complexity of student interactions relating to advising necessitates interaction with a person (Steele, 2006). Regardless of the chances of rendering academic advising obsolete, technology has influenced the role of academic advising and has added an additional dimension of ambiguity by blurring the delineation of tasks that should be completed by an advisor or a computer.

**Equity in Advising**

Advising can look and operate differently across campuses, and these differences can be problematic because the advising practice lacks standardization (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). For example, the student experience of advising differs when standards of advising are not established. Several authors have posited that differential delivery of academic advising creates inequitable experiences for students. These differences include variability of resources, advisor’s level of knowledge, advisor’s philosophy of advising, advisor’s motivation to advise, and advisor’s other tasks outside of face-to-face advising (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Bridgen, 2017; Karp & Stacey, 2013). That inequity can lead to a difference in the quality of service a student receives and ultimately can influence the effectiveness of the advising session in promoting positive student academic outcomes.

There is a lack of consensus regarding the appropriate role and level of prestige for academic advising. These differences exist both across and within campuses (Larson et al., 2019a). As a result, advisors report feeling underutilized and demoralized (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). The absence of a standardization of practice introduces variability to a student’s experience with advising (Karp & Stacey, 2013). In some institutions, advisors may be regarded as professionally equal to faculty and play an important role in translating the logic of the curriculum for their advisees across several rich and thought-provoking sessions. In other places, meeting with an advisor may simply be a checkpoint that a student passively navigates in
order to satisfy a requirement. The facets of the role of academic advising have changed substantially since advisors first formed a professional organization nearly 60 years ago. However, what has remained surprisingly constant throughout this history is the variability of the role of academic advising both across and within institutions.

**Previous Studies**

As stated earlier, the field of advising has changed significantly as it has evolved from a predominantly ancillary duty of college faculty members to its present representation as a primary-role position at many colleges and universities. Through this evolution, the role of academic advising has shifted as models of prescriptive, developmental, and learning-focused advising emerged. These shifts in the occupation have made it difficult for academic advising to be directly studied, leading to inconsistent findings (Kot, 2014). Nonetheless, scholars have made recent advancements in defining the normative roles of academic advising, the professionalization of academic advising, the emergence of empirically-supported models of academic advising, and the understanding of the connection between advising and student academic outcomes in a variety of college and university settings. Questions remain about the role administrators of academic advising play in shaping the role of academic advising. A review of relevant previous studies follows.

**The Creation of a Normative Purpose and Function of Academic Advising**

Prior to 2017, which saw the creation of the *Core Competencies of Academic Advising* and a revision of the *Core Values of Academic Advising*, there was little agreement in the advising literature about what (beyond student engagement) is essential to academic advising (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Bridgen, 2017; Habley et al., 2012; McGill, 2018; Menke et al., 2018; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). NACADA members have created or collaborated with other organizations to create several resources that delineate the role of academic advising. These documents include the *Core Competencies of Academic Advising* (NACADA, 2017a), the *Core Values of Academic Advising* (NACADA, 2017b), the *Concept of Academic Advising* (NACADA, 2006), and the *Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards of Academic Advising Programs* (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2014).
First, the Core Competencies of Academic Advising is considered “the foundational elements for effective advisor training programs and advising practice” (NACADA, 2017a, para. 3). The Core Competencies of Academic Advising is 20 statements which delineate the knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding advisors should possess (NACADA, 2017b). The statements are categorized into three thematic categories and can be found in Table 1. Next, the Core Values of Academic Advising serves to “provide guidance to academic advisors in their professional lives.” (NACADA, 2017b, para. 2). The Core Values of Academic Advising is comprised of seven values: respect, inclusivity, commitment, professionalism, empowerment, integrity, and caring (NACADA, 2017b). These are detailed in Table 2. Third, the Concept of Academic Advising is “an association’s statement on academic advising” (NACADA, 2006, para. 2). The Concept of Academic Advising contains the curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning outcomes for academic advising (NACADA, 2006). Habley et al. (2012) notes that the Concept of Academic Advising falls short of providing a definition of academic advising. Fourth, the CAS Standards of Academic Advising Programs “provide a framework for developing strong academic advising programs” (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2014, pg. 3). The CAS Standards of Academic Advising Programs outlines, in 12 parts, integral components of academic advising programs. Menke et al. (2018) notes that the CAS Standards do not establish necessary competencies for advisors.

In addition to the documents listed above, NACADA has recently published the following books, all which offer many conceptions of the purpose and function of academic advising. They include: The New Advisor Guidebook (Folsom, Yoder, & Joslin, 2015), Academic Advising Approaches (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013), and Beyond Foundations: Developing as a Master Academic Advisor (Grites, Miller, & Voler, 2016). Each of these publications offers different perspectives on advising; and while this provides flexibility to accommodate advising in a variety of settings, it also contributes ambiguity to the field. While ongoing work continues to refine the purpose and function of advising (e.g. Larson et al., 2019), Habley (2013) laments the problem of a lack of a universal definition of academic advising by referencing over 24 definitions of academic advising. In sum, substantial efforts spanning decades have been put forth to guide the purpose and function of advising; however, this level of breadth contributes to a lack of a focused role of academic advising. This lack of a focused role may contribute to the multiple interpretations of the status of professionalization of the field of
academic advising. The next section will explore how these purposes and functions relate to student outcomes.

Advising and Student Outcomes

When it comes to measuring student outcomes relating to academic advising, success is relatively defined. Generally, the findings of studies that link advising and “student success” either: (1) link advising positively to variables that have already been linked to student persistence and completion, or (2) connect via correlation or regression the number of advising sessions with persistence and completion. In a study of four-year university psychology students, meeting with an advisor was found to be positively related to increased student responsibility, student self-efficacy, student study skills, and perceived support (Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2013). There is ample empirical support for a positive relationship between academic advising and student retention (Bai & Pan, 2009; Kot, 2014; Metzner, 1989; Robbins et al., 2009; Swecker et al., 2013). Swecker et al. (2013) demonstrated that every meeting with an advisor increased the odds of the student being retained fall-to-fall by 13%. Of these studies, Kot’s (2014) use of regression analysis and propensity score matching to account for selection bias controlled for the most potentially confounding variables, resulting in a strong argument in support of a positive relationship between academic advising and first term, second term, and first year GPA along with reduced attrition to the second year.

Two studies explored advising and student outcomes but defined advising in a slightly less conventional manner. In an exploration of an advising program that began in the student’s high school years and continued into college, Barr and Castleman (2017) supported the role of “high impact” academic advising as a potential strategy in reducing inequality of student achievement in higher education (p.21). Another study found academic coaching (which was described similarly to academic advising in the article) increased student persistence rates by 5% in their first year and 3-4% in subsequent years (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

One study, commissioned by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE, 2018), reported that both faculty and students believed that advising and academic planning were very important. Additionally, the study found that students who spent more time with their academic advisor (either in duration of the session or in the number of sessions) were
more engaged on campus. This study illustrated the sum total benefit of advising by outlining the multifaceted way in which advisors influence student academic outcomes:

…[Advisors] help students feel welcome and engaged. Perhaps most important, they help students experience early successes—meeting financial aid deadlines, enrolling in courses that advance their career goals, and so on—that build their confidence. Over time, these early successes accumulate and give students a strong foundation for persevering and meeting the challenges of completing college (CCCSE, 2018, p.1).

In total, there is ample support for the relationship between academic advising and positive student academic outcomes.

**Empirically Supported Models of Academic Advising**

A general lack of research interest has contributed to a lack of generalizable claims about effective academic advising models (Habley, 2009). The variability of advising services, student populations, and campuses prevents researchers from generalizing efficacy relating to specific advising approaches (Kot, 2014). Also, evaluating effective advising is cumbersome because studies have different definitions and programs that encompass “counseling” and “advising” (Bettinger & Baker, 2014, p.5). However, as the field has grown its body of research in the last decade, methods that afford greater generalizability are appearing in the advising literature (e.g. Kot, 2014).

There are several facets of effective advising sessions. Positive appraisals of the student-advisor relationship and student academic achievement have been reported to be positively related (DeLaRosby, 2017; Jordan, 2016; Mottarella, Fritzsch, & Cerabino, 2004; Vianden & Barlow, 2015). The modality, frequency, and advisor approach to advising also matter to students. When compared to virtual forms of meeting with advisors, students prefer to meet face-to-face for questions that are complex (Kalamkarian & Karp, 2015). Regarding the frequency of meetings, having consistent individual advising meetings was demonstrated to be imperative for developmental advising to be effective (Karp & Stacey, 2013). In terms of approach, prescriptive advising, which treats the advising interaction as transactional, is viewed as the least effective advising strategy (Bryant et al., 2017). Taken together, there appears to be general agreement that effective advising occurs when the student is an active participant in the advising
session, the advisor builds a relationship with the student, and the advising sessions are consistent and of adequate length.

**Advising in Community Colleges**

Much of the research on the effects of academic advising has occurred with students in four-year universities (e.g. Kot, 2014). However, there are important differences between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education relating to missions, divisional reporting lines, and unique challenges. The missions and visions of two-year and four-year colleges share many similarities; however, Jinhao, Gibson, Salinas, Solis, & Slate, (2007) noted their language typically differed along the lines of idealism vs. pragmatism. Four-year universities’ language was, on average, more idealistically worded (i.e. providing excellence in teaching and research) whereas two year-institutions were more pragmatically worded (i.e. attaining vocational and technical skills). This is illustrative of two-year institutions acknowledging the needs of the underprepared students they serve (Jinhao et al., 2007). Two-year campuses have a greater variety of divisional reporting lines for academic advising (i.e. Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, etc.), whereas academic advising at four-year institutions tends to be housed in the division of Academic Affairs (Huber & Miller, 2013). There are several issues endemic to community colleges that are barriers to effective academic advising. These include high student-advisor ratios, constrained budgets, and limited time to meet with students (Karp & Stacey, 2013; Woods et al., 2017). This results in students being unable to access an advisor, students lacking an assigned advisor, students receiving conflicting information, and students being confused about how to interpret information that is presented to them (Karp & Stacey, 2013). As a function of their different missions, divisional reporting lines, and unique challenges, it is highly likely that academic advising is markedly different between two-year and four-year institutions.

**Administrative Decision-Making**

“People make sense of things by seeing a world on which they already imposed what they believe” (Weick, 1995, p. 15). The decisions of leaders are shaped by their existing cognitive frameworks. When faced with new circumstances, a leader must engage in “sensemaking”, the process of understanding new situations (Maitlis & Chirstianson, 2014;
Ancona, 2012). This process involves leader cognition, how and what leaders think, and is a significant contributor to their sense-making of change and how they communicate it to their followers (Eddy, 2003). Additional to a leader’s cognitions are many other factors that influence a leader’s decision-making, especially when considering the interaction of policy and local practice. Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer (2002) developed a complex model which sought to explain how individuals make sense of policy in academic contexts:

What a policy means for implementing agents is constituted in the interaction of their existing cognitive structures (including knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), their situation, and the policy signals. How the implementing agents understand the policy’s message(s) about local behavior is defined in the interaction of these three dimensions (p. 388).

Unpacking this model, a “cognitive framework” emerges involving the “individual cognition”, “situated cognition”, and “[r]ole of representation” (Spillane et al., 2002, pp. 388-389). Individual cognition involves the interaction of interpreting stimuli in the context of prior knowledge, beliefs, experiences, values, and emotions (Spillane et al., 2002). Next, the situated cognition is “how multiple dimensions of a situation influence the implementing agent’s sense-making from and about policy” (Spillane et al., 2002, p.389). Third, the role of representation is how the policy conveys the “reform idea” and how it is interpreted by the individual in the translation to local action (Spillane et al., 2002, p.416). For example, some policies simply convey goals or desired outcomes in concise statements, whereas others provide a robust explanation of the justification for the policy, examples of implementation, and principles of the policy. The individual’s prior understandings interact with their local situation and are influenced by how the policy is communicated. Thus, exploring the individual leader, their situation, and the policy itself are important components of understanding a leader’s sense making of policy. In the context of academic advising, it is important to note how these three items interact to shape the role of academic advising at a local level.

Alongside these interacting factors is a leader’s understanding of their subordinates’ role. This understanding is important because it is related to the well-being of the subordinates (Artz, Goodall, & Oswald, 2017). A lack of role understanding by leaders has been demonstrated in the related field of school counseling (Zalaquett, 2005), and, unfortunately, there is evidence to indicate this exists in advising as well (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Bridgen, 2017; Johnson et al., 2015; Smith, 2013). However, this evidence comes from only a few studies and a national survey of administrators, so more research in this area is needed.
Leader cognitions, cognitive frameworks, and understanding of their subordinates’ role provides a structure for understanding how policy is interpreted and translated into practical application. In the FCS, legislative action, particularly developmental education reform and the performance funding measure, has shaped the work of academic advisors and leaders of academic advising. The following section will further enumerate how legislative decisions have shaped leaders’ actions in the context of academic advising.

**Institutional Characteristics**

RQ2 and RQ3 were designed to explore the potential institutional characteristics that related to how administrators perceive the role of the academic advisor. Based on extant scholarship, the institutional characteristics of enrollment size, urbanicity, percentage of non-traditional aged students, performance-based funding status, and the number of NACADA members were explored in this study. Supporting scholarship for each of these characteristics is provided hereafter.

*Enrollment.* The NACADA National Survey (2011) established remarkable differences in advisor caseloads based on the enrollment size of the institution. In reviewing this survey, Robbins (2013) established that larger institutions reported higher advisor caseloads. “[T]he median individual advisor case loads are 233, 333, and 600 advisees for small, medium, and large institutions, respectively” (Para 1). For this study, small institutions had fewer than 5,999 students, medium institutions encompassed enrollments ranging from 6,000 to 23,999, and large institutions had enrollments of 24,000 or greater. Differences in caseloads bear significant consequences for the responsibilities, delivery, and approaches of academic advisors (Robbins, 2013). For example, an advisor with a large caseload cannot meet individually or for multiple sessions with each student on their roster. And this difference in caseload can have implications for student engagement. “Students who spend more time with their advisors, in either longer or more frequent sessions, are more engaged. However, many students’ advising experiences fall on the least-intensive end of the spectrum” (CSSE, 2018, p. 13). Taken further, the administrators of advisors, in their shaping of the advising program, might differ in how they view the role of the advisor based on the constrictions imposed by large caseloads.
**Urbanization.** There are four general categories of urbanization within the IPEDS database: City, Suburb, Town and Rural. Waller and Tietjen-Smith (2009) found that student fall-to-fall retention rates were highest for full- and part-time students in colleges designated as suburban. The rate descended from city to town to rural. For middle-achieving students, Goble, Rosenbaum, and Stephan (2008) found support for suburban colleges being significantly positively related to degree completion in comparison to other levels of urbanicity. While there is ample support for the conclusion that student academic achievement differs based on the degree of urbanization of the institution, no study to date has explored how advising is conceptualized across these different institutional settings (Urias & Wood, 2014). Additionally, there has been no known exploration regarding how an institution's level of urbanization influences an administrator’s perception of the role of the academic advisor.

**Percentage of Non-Traditional Aged Students.** Students over age 25 often have a different experience of college than their typical-aged peers. Some of the differences that can emerge are: having greater difficulty making connections with peers, having less access to information, and encountering different barriers throughout their college journey. These challenges require different approaches to academic advising (Karmelita, 2020). Therefore, the percentage of non-traditional aged students at a given institution may be related to the specific roles of the academic advisor. Additionally, administrators may conceptualize the role of the academic advisor differently when the needs of students differ.

**Performance-Based Funding.** A significant piece of legislation that impacted academic advising in the FCS is the Florida College System Performance-Based Incentive. The Florida Legislature created the Florida College System Performance-Based Incentive (2018) to provide financial awards to FCS institutions for meeting specific criteria within performance-based measures. The current model rewards colleges for meeting metrics relating to retention, completion, wages, and employment/continuing education (The Florida College System, 2018). In a survey of FCS administrators, retention was one of the listed top three outcomes of academic advising (Florida College System Council of Student Affairs, 2018). Thus, it appears this legislation placed additional pressure on academic advising to increase student retention. Problems arise when retention becomes a primary function of academic advising. For example, Bridgen (2017) cited retention efforts as one of the driving forces that influenced administrator
perceptions of the role of advising. This led to advisor lamentations that their primary goal was reduced to fostering student retention instead of holding the student accountable for their academic situation (Bridgen, 2017).

**NACADA Members.** NACADA is currently the largest organization for academic advisors. Membership in NACADA offers a host of resources and connections to the advising community. Evidence suggests that NACADA plays a notable role in the socialization of academic advisors (McGill, Duslak, & Puroway, 2020). To date, no research has explored whether the number of NACADA memberships influences the role conceptualization of the advisor at that institution. Furthermore, as the number of NACADA members at a given institution increases, the possibility exists for an additive influence on the administrators’ perception of the role of the academic advisor.

**Additional Factors**

**External Actors.** As mentioned previously, an important component of an administrator’s decision-making, with regard to policy implementation, includes the idea of “situational cognition”, which incorporates how additional facets of a given situation influence a leader’s approach to policy implementation (Spillane et al., 2002, p.389). There are many external factors that potentially influence a leader’s decision making about the role of the academic advisors at their institution. Specific to academic advising in higher education, these external factors likely include: following the institutional mission, vision, and goals; meeting retention/completion goals; increasing student introductory college-level course completion rates; following state statutory requirements related to academic advising (such as the aforementioned SB 1720); increasing student continuing education; and increasing student post-graduation employment. NACADA communications, publications, and resources; other professional organizations (e.g. NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education; American College Personnel Association); and increasing student post-graduation wages. This list was derived from extant publications from the Florida College System (2020), NACADA (2020), the Community College Research Center (Jenkins et al.,2018), The Center for Postsecondary Success (Hu et al., 2016), and the Florida Legislature (SB 1720).
Barriers. Additional to external factors that potentially shape an administrator’s view of the role of the academic advisor are barriers to reaching the ideal operation of the department. These barriers include: caseload size, a lack of financial resources, advisor turnover, a lack of technology, a lack of advisor training and development, and a lack of advisor competency. These barriers were identified from scholarship published by NACADA (Robbins, 2013; Reinarz, 2002; Voller, 2012) and an administrator survey administered by the FCS (2018).

Advisor Professionalization. There is an ongoing debate regarding the status of academic advising as a full-fledged profession (McGill, 2018). Those who challenge the professionalization of academic advising have audited academic advising’s status as a profession against a stage model from which an occupation becomes professionalized (Wilensky, 1964). The model contains five sequential stages of professionalization (1) the generation of a full-time occupation from other occupations; (2) the establishment of schools to train new workers in the occupation; (3) winning the support of law for the protection of the occupation’s territory (occasionally meaning the creation of licensure); (4) the formation of professional associations; and (5) creating a formal code of ethics for members of the occupation (Wilensky, 1964; see Shaffer et al., 2010 for a translation of this model to the field of academic advising).

Some argue that academic advising has yet to reach professional status (Johnson et al., 2015; Shaffer et al., 2010). Shaffer et al. (2010) posited that although academic advising had progressed through four stages of professionalization, they occurred out of sequence. The third stage of professionalization, regarding support of law, was not addressed. Shaffer et al., defends these claims by charting historical milestones as they relate to Wilensky’s (1964) stages of professionalization. The first graduate certificate program in academic advising was developed in 2003 and was followed by a master’s degree program in 2008 (McGill, 2018). The creation of NACADA occurred prior to the establishment of training programs, and therefore the field had not yet developed a sufficiently unified knowledge base. Johnson and colleagues (2015), in a survey of advisors at a national conference, found that 67% of advisors did not believe academic advising met the definition of a profession after being provided with an explanation of Wilensky's (1964) model. One reason commonly cited for academic advising not reaching professional status is that the field has exclusively borrowed from related fields to form its body of knowledge. Many of the theories of advising were derived from other disciplines, and several
authors argue that advising itself lacks a unique body of knowledge (Habley, 2009; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).

Professionalization affords benefits such as self-governance, reputation, and recognition (McGill, 2018). Therefore, the perception of academic advising’s status as a profession is important in shaping the role of academic advising. If advising is viewed as a profession, optimally, advisors will be given greater latitude and autonomy to define and construct programming that is congruent with the advisor’s vision of the role of advising. However, if advising is viewed as a para-profession, then it may also be subjected to greater oversight and architecting by the administrators of advising—who are more abstracted from the actual practice of academic advising and possibly possess a simplistic understanding of academic advising (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). Thus, recognition as a profession may affect the amount of control academic advisors have over defining the purpose and function of their practice.

Local Context

This DiP surveyed upper-level administrators in the FCS to further the understanding of how administrators’ perceptions of the occupation of academic advisors are related to the normative role of academic advising. It is important to understand the context of this setting, as institutional characteristics and legislation likely interplay with administrators’ perceptions in the shaping of the role of academic advising in these colleges (Spillane et al., 2002). This section will outline the demographics of the FCS, will examine recent state legislation that has directly impacted academic advising, and will summarize previous research that is related to advisors in the FCS.

The Florida College System (FCS)

The FCS offers certificates, two-year transfer degrees, two-year terminal workforce degrees, and four-year workforce bachelor’s degrees (FDOE & FCS, 2018). Institutions ranged in size from from 1,820 students (Florida Keys Community College) to 112,240 students (Miami-Dade Community College) in annual headcount for Fall 2019. For the entire system’s student population, 65% are enrolled part-time, the average full- and part-time ages are 19 and 26 respectively, 60% identify as female, and 60% identify as non-white. The FCS employs over 45,179 people with just under half representing faculty (FCS Factbook, 2019).
The Florida State legislature has the power to exert significant policy control over the 28 colleges in the FCS because of a centralized funding model and educational system governance structure that largely serves to ensure policy adherence and fidelity (Fletcher, 2016; Mullin & Honeyman, 2007; Dowd & Grant, 2006). Two recent policy changes have impacted academic advising. In 2013, Senate Bill 1720 (SB 1720) eliminated the requirement for developmental education for many students attending colleges in the FCS and mandated academic counseling or advising for students regarding placement options (Fla. S.B. 1720, § 2013-51, 2013). This led to a reduction of enrollment in developmental education courses a decrease in course-based passing rates for students taking gateway courses, but an increase in cohort-based pass rates in introductory level college English or Math courses (Hu et al., 2016). Colleges in the FCS had different perceptions of the policy and subsequently enacted different local practices (Park et al., 2016). Additionally, SB 1720 resulted in 52.6% of responding FCS colleges reporting that they increased the types of advising services but only 31.6% increased the amount of advising offered (Woods et al., 2017). Taken together, this research suggests that SB 1720 may have increased workloads for academic advisors through mandated tasks (required informing of students) and by creating student circumstances that require additional student support (i.e. a student taking a gateway course when they are unprepared).

The State of Academic Advising in the FCS

Given the variability of institutional size, there is a wide range of department sizes for academic advisors in the FCS (Florida College System Council of Student Affairs (FCSCSA), 2018). Many academic advisors are full-time advisors who have received training specific to academic advising. There are an average of 32 full-time, lower-division degree program (i.e. Associate-level) advisors for each institution in the FCS, and the range is 3-102. There is an average of six full-time, upper-division degree program (i.e. Bachelor-level) advisors for each institution in the FCS, and the range is 1-42 (FCSCSA, 2018).

To the best of my knowledge, there has been only one research endeavor that addressed academic advising in the FCS. This study was conducted by the Center for Postsecondary Success at Florida State University and resulted in several publications relating to developmental education reform (Center for Postsecondary Success, n.d.). One publication notes that only 52% of studied FCS institutions report that academic advising is meeting students’ needs (Woods et
al., 2017). There are concerns about advisors having ample time to meet with students because caseloads are too high (Woods et al., 2017).

Recently, the FCS Council of Student Affairs (FCSCSA) conducted a survey of academic advising in its 28 institutions (Florida College System Council of Student Affairs, 2018). Much of the survey gathered descriptive data on the advisors in the FCS (ex. caseload, part vs full-time, and faculty vs. primary responsibility academic advisors). Interestingly, one question asked respondents (executive-level leaders in the FCS) to provide the top two to three outcomes of a successful advising session. Seven different answers were provided: “(1) Student is successfully on-boarded and necessary enrollment steps are completed; (2) A completed program of study; (3) Identified academic and career goals; (4) Students are placed in an appropriate pathway; (5) A relationship is developed between the student and advisor; (6) Students are seen in a timely manner; and (7) Students are informed of all academic and student support” (Florida College System Council of Student Affairs, 2018, Slide 21). These answers suggest a wide variety of viewpoints of the role of advising are held by executive-level administrators in the FCS.

**Summary and Contributions**

Ample research with sufficient rigor has supported the claim that academic advising is positively related to student academic performance (e.g. Kot, 2014). The roles of academic advising have been redefined over the course of the past 40 years, and only recently have concerted efforts been made to identify a set of competencies for academic advisors (NACADA, 2017a). The field of academic advising has struggled with defining itself as a profession and obtaining professional recognition on many college campuses (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2015; McGill, 2018; Shaffer et al., 2010). A lack of a definition of academic advising and a reduced status of advisors on campuses has prevented advisors from practicing optimally and affects the equity of service (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). Many aspects of this problem have been researched to date. However, research calls for understanding administrator perceptions of advising have been left unanswered (Bridgen, 2017; Johnson et al., 2015). The Florida context is unique in that significant recent policy changes have impacted academic advising, such as S.B. 1720 (2013) and the Florida College System Performance Funding Incentive (2016). There are many factors that influence administrators’ translation of policy into practice, and these include prior beliefs, the local context, and the manner in which the policy is
presented (Spillane et al., 2002). This DiP seeks to add to this body of literature by exploring the extent of executive-level administrators’ understanding of the normative purposes and functions of academic advisors. Additionally, this DiP seeks to explore to what degree administrator perceptions of the role of academic advising vary across institutional size, performance funding award status, and administrator perceptions of the professionalization of academic advising.

The findings of this study contribute to shaping the role of academic advising in the Florida College System and potentially worldwide. Presenting a well-defined role of academic advising is a key component in gaining recognition as a profession. Otherwise, as has been the case for decades, the field will continue to ebb and flow as institutional differences in the interpretation of the occupation drive the purpose and function of academic advising.

Administrators of advisors are the local entities that interpret legislative and institutional policy in the shaping of the role of academic advisors. However, they also contribute a subjective perception of what constitutes academic advising. Understanding this perception will provide insights that indicate the areas in which this perception is congruent with the normative roles of academic advising and where it is divergent. Those areas of divergence can become the focus of future studies. In total, this study has the potential to forward the conversation of academic advising as a profession, ultimately resulting in better and more standardized advising for students throughout higher education.
CHAPTER 3

INVESTIGATIVE APPROACH

This DiP utilized an exploratory study design to investigate the perceptions of executive-level administrators’ perceptions of the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. An exploratory model of study is designed to generate insights about factors within a problem of practice and offer potential solutions (Florida State University, 2018). This model was selected because the practice of academic advising varies greatly across and within institutions and different stakeholders define academic advising differently (Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2019a). For example, there are more than two dozen published definitions of academic advising (Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012).

This chapter outlines the design of the study. Specifically, this chapter addresses the sample and sample-selection approach, the data sources and collection procedures, and the analytic approaches that were employed. Furthermore, this chapter delineates the limitations of the study.

Research Design

This DiP was designed to survey executive-level administrators in the FCS with a direct supervisory line to academic advising. My two research questions are as follows:

(1) What is the degree of alignment between upper-level higher education administrators' perceptions of academic advising roles and the normative roles of academic advisors?

(2) Does this alignment vary by institutional characteristics of enrollment size, urbanicity, percentage of non-traditional aged students, performance-funding award status, and the number of NACADA members at the institution?

(3) What external actors, barriers, job analogues, minimum education requirements, and future certification requirements do administrators identify in the context of the role of academic advisors at their institution?

The goal was to survey one executive-level administrator from each of the 28 institutions in the FCS. Preliminary conversations with leaders in the FCS indicated support for this survey
of administrators (Dr. K. Barrett, personal communication, February 22, 2019). The survey population frame was constructed from organizational charts, which are publicly-accessible for each FCS institution. Data to analyze additional variables was accessed through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and information from the FCS website.

**Study Design**

This study utilized an exploratory design and the primary data were collected via a survey of executive-level administrators with organizational reporting lines to academic advising. This survey contained questions designed to conceptualize executive-level administrator’s perceptions of the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising.

**Survey Instrument**

Participants accessed the survey via a hyperlink contained in an email sent through the Qualtrics survey software. The survey contained 17 items and began with an informed consent page. Once the respondent agreed to participate in the study, they were presented with the survey items. The survey was separated into four parts. The first three parts related to the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. The fourth part related to the external actors, barriers, related occupations, minimum education requirements, and whether certification should be required for advisors to practice advising.

The first part contained five items relating to the administrator’s perceptions of the purposes of advising. These items were developed from over 15 definitions of academic advising (NACADA, 2003; Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemeyer, 2019). Each definition was examined and distinct aspects relating to the purpose (the reason why) of academic advising were identified, resulting in ten items on question 1-1. In order to ensure that a comprehensive set of purposes was available to be chosen, two write-in items were also offered, which allowed respondents to add a purpose of their own, if necessary. The respondent was required to select five items from this list as the most important purposes of academic advising. In the subsequent question (1-2), the respondent was asked to rank those five items in order of importance. The third question (1-3) was an open-ended question in which the respondents were prompted to share the reasons for their ranking. In the last question, the participants were asked to select a verb from a list of six verbs related to advising as the word that most closely described the
The purpose of question 1-4 was to solicit administrator perceptions of the purpose of academic advising in an alternate manner from items 1-1 through 1-3.

Part two of the survey focused on the outcomes of academic advising, and the four survey items in this section followed the same pattern of inquiry as items 1-1 through 1-4 in part one. They were developed from extant literature detailing the desired outcomes of academic advising (NACADA, 2006, Powers, Carlstrom, & Hughey, 2014; Zarges, Adams, Higgins, & Muhovich, 2018). In a similar fashion to part one, each outcome choice in the first question of part two was derived from the extant literature. When there was outcome overlap from the literature consulted, it was condensed into one item.

Part three of the survey contained questions relating to the functions of academic advising and also follows the pattern of inquiry for items 1-1 through 1-4. These items were based on 2011 NACADA national (in the United States of America) survey of academic advisors. Items were added to the present survey if respondents to the national survey indicated greater than 50% agreement for a specific item relating to the responsibilities of academic advisors (Huber & Miller, 2013). In a similar fashion to part one, each function choice in the question was derived from the extant literature. When there was outcome overlap from the literature consulted, it was condensed into one item.

Part four contained four additional questions about the potential factors that may influence an administrator’s beliefs about the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. The first two questions (4-1, 4-2) were pick, group, and rank questions relating to the external actors (such as professional organizations and state mandates) and barriers (such as advisor turnover) that could have influenced the respondents’ answers to the previous questions. For question 4-3, respondents selected a related occupation that most closely resembles academic advising from a list of five occupations. The subsequent questions (4-4, 4-5) addressed the minimum education required to perform the work of academic advising and whether professional certification should be required to practice academic advising. Questions 4-3 through 4-5 represented facets of the professionalization of academic advising. For example, certification would imply the existence a distinct area of knowledge relating to academic advising—a tenet of professionalization (Wilensky1964). The survey instrument is provided in Appendix 1.

The Core Competencies and Core Values of Academic Advising have not faced substitutional dispute. Therefore, using them in the survey to understand the role of academic
advisors would likely lead to administrator agreement with all aspects of these items. By separating the role of the academic advisor into the purposes, outcomes, and functions, a multifaceted understanding of the work, responsibilities, and expectations of academic advisors was able to be constructed. This separation of the role of academic advisors into these three parts mirrored many job descriptions which articulate the purpose, tasks, and outcomes for a given position. Certainly, other aspects of the role of the academic advisor could have been studied (e.g. advisor career ladders); however, the survey was purposefully limited in length and complexity to afford the greatest chances of obtaining responses from a sample of leaders with whom times is typically scarce.

**Participant Recruitment.** My DiP sought to study executive-level administrators with a supervisory line to academic advising in the FCS. This population was selected for two reasons. First, institutions that predominantly grant two-year degrees are understudied in the field of academic advising research (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016). Second, previous NACADA studies have surveyed advisors and first year supervisors of advising about their perceptions of the purposes, outcomes, and functions of the field (Smith, 2013), but no known study to date has studied these perceptions for executive-level administrators. Because this total population was composed of only 28 individuals, the entire population received an invitation to participate in the study (a census sample). Contact information for each of these participants was publicly available.

The FCS has a Council of Presidents (COP) which serves as a collective body to examine matters of public higher education and then communicate recommendations to the FCS’s Chancellor of Education. The Council of Student Affairs (CSA) is a sub-council of the COP composed of upper-level administrators in student affairs from the 28 FCS institutions. Their role is to inform the COP of matters of public education in the FCS relating to student affairs. I attended a CSA meeting on June 10-11, 2020 and informed the potential participants that a survey email would be forthcoming. The meeting was held virtually, and I presented during the open discussion portion of the meeting. On June 15th, 2020 I distributed the survey via email as individual survey links through the Qualtrics software. This allowed for the embedding of institutional data gathered from the IPEDS database with the respondents’ data from the survey. The email solicitation included the information necessary for informed consent and highlighted
the importance of the confidentiality of the data gathered. Respondents were given a week to respond to the survey before email reminder messages were sent June 23. A second reminder was sent June 30. If potential participants did not complete the survey, I called the remaining individuals and encouraged them to complete the survey. An offer to share the analysis of the data after the study is concluded was included to encourage participants to respond. Given their roles, I expected potential participants would perceive value in understanding the normative roles of academic advising and how FCS institutions are framing this role. In conclusion, 20 responses were obtained.

**Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures for RQ 1**

The data for this research question came from the survey of executive-level administrators in the FCS.

Once the data-gathering period had ended, all data was exported from Qualtrics to Microsoft Excel. The raw data was processed to allow for the appropriate analysis to occur and is described hereafter. Appendix D, Table 1 illustrates the item-level data generated and the analysis conducted for each item. In general, all items that required the participant to select items (e.g. picking the five top purposes of academic advising) generated data which corresponded to counts for each statement. This data was then analyzed to produce means and standard deviations. This analyzed data was further categorized by IV, affording for whole group and categorized comparisons of means. All items that required the participant to rank items (e.g. ranking the top five purposes they selected) generated a raw rank number which was then averaged. This was then averaged for all participants and by independent variable (e.g. enrollment size). Once this data transformation and analysis was performed conditional formatting in the form of color scale representation was used to assist in identifying outlier responses. For example, items that were rated highly were shaded in cooler colors (blue/green) whereas items that were rated lower were shaded in warmer colors (yellow/red). Appendix D Figure 2 demonstrates the conditional color coding of the top purposes of academic advising and includes the frequency count and average rank for each possible selection categorized by the independent variable of enrollment size.
Analytic Approach to RQ 1

Descriptive research is appropriate for understanding a phenomenon of interest and serves as a means of winnowing the possibilities of causal mechanisms (Loeb et al., 2017). Descriptive research is “a powerful tool for fueling discovery and advancing knowledge” (Loeb et al., 2017, p. 40). This form of analysis was used to develop an understanding of how administrators perceive the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. Therefore, this study employed descriptive research analysis techniques to answer RQ 1.

Table 1 below provides the item number, item text, data examples, data format, and analysis for each item on the survey.

Table 1

*Item-Level Data Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item Text</th>
<th>Data Example</th>
<th>Data Format</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part I. Purposes of Academic Advising</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>A purpose is the reason why something is done. Select or write in the five most important purposes of academic advising.</td>
<td>“Support and encourage students”</td>
<td>Count of selections</td>
<td>Overall sum Sums of selections by IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Rank the priority of these five items from most to least important</td>
<td>Selection from previous item</td>
<td>Rank (1[high]-5[low])</td>
<td>Overall Mean rank Mean rank by IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>What did you consider when identifying the top purposes of academic advising?</td>
<td>“The student.”</td>
<td>Short text answer</td>
<td>Emergent coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>Which verb most closely describes the purpose of academic advising? Rank these items.</td>
<td>“Teaching”</td>
<td>Rank (1[high]-6[low])</td>
<td>Overall Mean rank Mean rank by IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part II. Outcomes of Academic Advising</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>An outcome is the desired result of an activity. List the five most important outcomes of academic advising:</td>
<td>“Increased student GPAs”</td>
<td>Count of selection</td>
<td>Overall sum Sums of selections by IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2-2</th>
<th>Rank the priority of these five items from most to least important</th>
<th>Selection from previous item</th>
<th>Rank (1[high]-5[low])</th>
<th>Overall Mean rank Mean rank by IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>What did you consider when identifying the top outcomes of academic advising?</td>
<td>“Student engagement.”</td>
<td>Short text answer</td>
<td>Emergent coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>What category of outcomes most resembles the outcomes for academic advising at your institution?</td>
<td>“Student Behavioral Outcomes”</td>
<td>Rank (1[high]-5[low])</td>
<td>Overall Mean rank Mean rank by IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Part III. Functions of Academic Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-1</th>
<th>A function is the work performed. List the five most important functions of academic advising:</th>
<th>“Help schedule courses”</th>
<th>Count of selection</th>
<th>Overall sum Sums of selections by IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>Rank the priority of these five items from most to least important</td>
<td>Selection from previous item</td>
<td>Rank (1[high]-5[low])</td>
<td>Overall Mean rank Mean rank by IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>What did you consider when identifying the top functions of academic advising?</td>
<td>“Student needs.”</td>
<td>Short text answer</td>
<td>Emergent coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Which, if any, of these functions are OUTSIDE the scope of academic advising (select all that apply)</td>
<td>“Filing paperwork for a dean”</td>
<td>Frequency of selection</td>
<td>Total frequency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Part IV. Additional Questions

| 4-1 | To what extent did the following external actors influence your responses of the functions, purposes, and outcomes of the academic advising program at your institution? (Pick, group, rank) | “Institutional mission, vision, and goals” | Count of selection Grouping (highly influential, somewhat influential, minimally influential) Rank (dependent on grouping) | Overall sum of categorization of selections Mean rank by IV |

35
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-2</th>
<th>What are some barriers toward meeting the ideal functions, purposes, and goals of the academic advising program at your institution? Select all that apply. (Pick, group, rank)</th>
<th>“Advisor turnover”</th>
<th>Count of selection Grouping (significant barrier, somewhat of a barrier, minimal barrier)</th>
<th>Overall sum of categorization of selections Mean rank by IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Count of selection</strong> Grouping (significant barrier, somewhat of a barrier, minimal barrier)</td>
<td><strong>Rank (dependent on grouping)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Overall sum of categorization of selections Mean rank by IV</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Which occupation most closely resembles academic advising?</td>
<td>“Coach”</td>
<td>Count of selection</td>
<td>Overall sum of selection Sum of selection by IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>What should be the minimum level of education required for a primary-role academic</td>
<td>“Bachelors Degree”</td>
<td>Count of selection</td>
<td>Overall sum of selection Sum of selection by IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>To what extent do you agree with this statement: Professional certification should be required to practice academic advising.</td>
<td>Likert Scale (Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree)</td>
<td>Numerical value for each response</td>
<td>Overall sum of selection Sum of selection by IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all questions in parts one through three that have the -1 and -4 designations, descriptive information was reported. This includes the frequencies and percentages of each item selected within each question. For questions in parts one through three that have a -2 designation, the coded data was analyzed to produce means and standard deviations. This allowed for visual comparisons across variables. For questions in parts one through three with a -3 designation, content analysis was conducted, looking for patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Due to limited qualitative data collected in this study, I conducted an emergent coding process instead of imposing a priori data structure on the data. I identified common themes and cross checked those against the data collected from this analysis. Questions 4-1 through 4-4 were descriptively analyzed, and frequencies and percent responses for each item were reported. Question 4-5 was coded and descriptively analyzed, producing a mean and standard deviation for the question. In line with an exploratory study and a convergent methodology, the findings across all of these questions were triangulated to establish insights about the administrators’ beliefs about the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising (Cresswell, 2012).
Analytic Approach to RQ 2

To answer RQ2, the analysis for RQ1 was repeated across the groups disaggregated across size, degree of urbanization, and percent of adult-age students. For example, the responses to question 2-2, which prompts the respondent to rank the top five outcomes of academic advising, was aggregated by small, medium, and large institution sizes, and the mean rankings for each group was compared. Observations of the data and potential explanations for the findings were reported. The purpose of this analysis was to explore whether institutional factors appear to be related to how an administrator determines the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising at their institution.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures for RQ 3

This final research question explored administrators’ perceptions of the external actors, barriers, job analogues, minimum education requirements, and certification requirements for advisors at their institution. Responses to survey items 4-1 through 4-5 comprised the data to satisfy this research question. Items 4-1 and 4-2 were sort-and-rank items in which participants were given the opportunity to sort each item into a high, medium, or low category and then rank order each item within each category. This established both a broad and nuanced prioritization of the external factors and barriers that the administrators believed shaped the role of academic advising at their institution. Items 4-3, 4-4, and 4-5 were all multiple-choice items and were collected and aggregated as raw data.

Analytic Approach to RQ 3

Items 4-1 and 4-2 were analyzed descriptively. Each item was assessed for its categorical ranking as well as its within-category ranking. Questions 4-3 through 4-5 explored the professional analogs and qualifications for academic advising and were compared to NACADA’s publications that drew parallels between advising and the profession of teaching (e.g. Lowenstein, 2005) and the organization’s sponsorship of graduate programs in academic advising (NACADA, 2020). For example, if responses to question 4-4 indicated that the respondents, on average, reported that a bachelors degree is sufficient to conduct academic advising, then a discussion surrounding the value of graduate credentialing for academic
advising when it did not appear to be supported by administrators of advising could be
developed.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the study examined the perceptions of
administrators in the FCS. The findings of this study are most relevant to the FCS institutions
and extrapolations of the findings to other settings should be made with caution. This is not
causal data, and the small sample size prohibits analysis beyond a descriptive level. Second, the
study used an online survey as the predominant data source. Respondents’ level of technological
literacy and/or level of interest in the topic of the study could introduce bias in the findings of the
study. For example, an administrator who is less technologically savvy may have incorrectly
answered the survey due to technical error.

Because a complete census sample was not obtained, there is the potential for response
bias to occur. The degree of representation of the sample to the population was measured by
comparing the institutional characteristics of enrollment size, urbanicity, percentage of non-
traditional aged students, performance-based funding award, and NACADA members. Three
forms of analysis were employed. When means were obtainable (enrollment size, percentage of
non-traditional aged students, and NACADA members), a two-sample assuming unequal
variances single-tailed T-test was conducted. No significant differences across any of these
variables were observed. Because of the small population and sample size, a second analysis to
correct for small sample sizes was conducted by calculating the standard mean difference effect
size between the population and sample. According to the What Works Clearinghouse
Procedures Handbook (2017), an effect size greater than .25 is considered substantively
important. No effect size that met this threshold was observed for the three aforementioned
institutional variables. When means were unable to be calculated (urbanicity and performance-
based funding award), a visual comparison of the raw data was conducted. Observations
indicated comparable representations for urbanicity, with a slight overrepresentation of suburban
institutions and a slight underrepresentation of rural institutions when compared to the
population. Observations of performance-based funding award indicated a slight
overrepresentation of silver-earning institutions and slight underrepresentation of gold and
bronze-earning institutions. Based on these analyses, there did not appear to be any notable
differences between the sample and the population. Table 1 and figures 1 and 2 represent these findings.

Additionally, social desirability bias or acquiescence bias may have contributed to participants responding positively to the statements about the core competencies of academic advising. Still, the findings for this study have implications that can benefit student affairs administrators in the FCS, academic advising in the FCS, the executive administrators at the FCS, and NACADA.

Summary

This chapter outlined an exploratory study that investigates FCS administrators’ perceptions of the purpose and role of academic advising. A census sample of 28 administrators in the FCS comprised the potential participants of the survey. Through an exploratory design and convergent research methodology, survey data, data from the IPEDS database, and FCS performance-funding award status were analyzed as descriptive statistics, and thematic coding was applied to the open-ended survey questions. The subsequent chapter will delineate the findings, implications, recommendations, and dissemination plan of this study.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & DISSEMINATION PLAN

Study Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the alignment of administrator perceptions of the role of academic advisors and the normative role of academic advising as defined by NACADA. Furthermore, this study sought to understand whether institutional characteristics serve as moderating variables in the alignment. Lastly, this study explored administrators’ perceptions about the external actors and barriers that potentially shaped the role of the academic advisors at their institutions. This study, as a continuation of the scholarship resolving ambiguity about the role of academic advising, explored FCS administrators' perceptions of the purpose, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. Additionally, this study explored how institutional factors relate to these perceptions. Lastly, this study explored factors relating to the professionalization of academic advising, conceptualized as the administrators’ responses to questions about the external actors, barriers, job analogues, minimum education requirements, and future certification requirements pertaining to academic advising. This study was situated within the context of the FCS and focused on administrators one level removed from the chief executive of the college with a supervisory line to academic advising. One administrator from each of these institutions was invited via email to participate in an online survey. Twenty surveys were returned, and the findings of this survey are presented descriptively hereafter.

Findings

This section outlines the aggregate findings of 20 survey responses from upper-level administrators in the FCS. The findings are categorized by three aspects of the role of advising and several ancillary facets. These categories include the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. Additionally, the external factors that influence the advising program at their institution, the barriers to meeting the ideal purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising, the closest job analogue to academic advising, the minimum education requirements for an advisor, and whether advisors should possess certification to practice advising were also included in the survey. Appendix C lists all of the potential item selections. Throughout all of
the findings, the reporting of means refers to the rank mean score on a five-point scale, with one being the highest rank and five being the lowest rank.

(RQ 1) What is the Degree of Alignment Between Upper-Level Higher Education Administrators' Perceptions of Academic Advising Roles and the Normative Roles of Academic Advisors? The normative roles of academic advisors were separated into three categories, purposes, outcomes, and functions. This section explores the aggregate findings that relate to each of these three categories. Tables 2-12 provide the aggregated means, counts, and rankings (when appropriate) for each survey item that generated quantifiable data.

Purpose. The purpose of academic advising was defined as "the reason why something is done". For almost all of the respondents (n=18), "provide guidance with academic program planning" was chosen as a top five purpose of academic advising. Fourteen respondents chose "assist students in the clarification of their life goals." Two responses tied for the third most frequently mentioned item (n=12). They were "promote responsible and appropriate choices and facilitate a successful academic experience" and "support and encourage students." The fifth most frequently mentioned item (n=11) was "help students to approach their education in an organized and meaningful way." Notably, items that were more abstractly related to typical student outcome measures (e.g. fostering self-awareness and personal fulfillment) were listed less frequently.

The open-ended responses indicated that the rationale for these choices ranged widely and did not appear to follow a specific pattern. The reasons cited included the perceived fragility of a state college student, student academic outcomes, student career outcomes, and the importance of planning.

The verb analogues relating to the purpose of academic advising indicated an overall preference toward two verbs: "planning" and "supporting." This was followed by "teaching," "transforming," "informing," and "counseling." When compared to the historical notions of advising as prescriptively informing or developmentally pedagogical, this verb preference indicates a shift away from the informational and conceptual aspects of academic advising (i.e. informing and teaching/transforming respectively) toward concrete and relational purposes.
Outcomes. The outcomes of academic advising were defined as "the desired result of an activity." Although the purposes of academic advising were clustered moderately for this cohort, the outcomes of academic advising, there was an even greater agreement regarding the top outcomes of academic advising. All respondents (n=20) indicated that "increased completion of the students' academic program of study" was a top-five outcome of academic advising. This was closely followed by "increased student retention" (n=18), "increased student interaction rates with campus learning and support resources" (n=18), and "increased student knowledge of graduation requirements" (n=15). The items beyond those were mentioned far less frequently. These less-frequently mentioned items were "increased student campus engagement," "meeting the advising department's student learning outcomes," "increased student grade point averages (GPA)," "increased student job placement," "student satisfaction with advising," and "increased student wages after graduation." These findings indicate a clear preference for the student academic outcomes of completion, retention, and academic support over career-related, departmental goal-based, experiential, and relational outcomes.

The open-ended responses indicated the overwhelming influence of their focus on retention and completion in determining the top five outcomes they selected. While this first point emerged in a majority of responses, meeting the student's goals was also mentioned. The final theme that emerged from the open-ended responses was that the outcomes they chose were designed to keep a student on their path—suggesting the importance of process in addition to the product of retention and completion. Nonetheless, the responses indicated that the outcome goals of retention and completion were at the forefront of respondents' minds. For some, this was emphasized even more strongly by naming completion as the sole goal of higher education at 2-year institutions.

This preference appears to be reflected in the ratings for broad outcome categories. The top outcome category was "academic outcomes," followed by "behavioral outcomes," and "cognitive outcomes." "Post-graduation outcomes" and "affective outcomes" notably trailed these items.

Functions. The functions of academic advising were defined as “the work performed.” A majority of the respondents listed three functions of academic advising within their top five choices. These included “help develop a plan of study” (n = 18), “communicate degree
requirements to students” (n = 15), and “help explore career interests” (n = 11). Seven items fell in the middle of frequency, with “help select a major” (n = 9) garnering the highest mean rank score. Interestingly, “participate in professional development activities,” “conduct action research on advising,” and “serve on campus committees” were not listed as a top five function of academic advising by any respondent. These three items are typically related to the conceptual component of academic advising (Higginson, 2000) and are activities linked with the professionalizing of academic advising (McGill, 2019).

Some described their choice of top functions as the “nature of the academic advising experience” and the “role of the advisor,” suggesting a determinate understanding of the work of academic advising. Notably, students, not the advisor, were frequently mentioned in consideration of the functions of academic advising. These open-ended responses indicated a pattern that suggests that the functions of academic advising were driven by assisting students with navigating the college processes. This suggests that for many the position is shaped by the needs of the students, which, arguably, may come at the cost of the freedom of the advisor to shape his or her work.

An additional question in this section of the survey asked respondents to check which items off of a list of six were outside the functional scope of academic advising. Only one item, “filing paperwork for a dean” (n = 14), was listed by a majority of respondents. This was followed by “counseling an upset student” (n = 6). The other four items, “building a schedule for a student,” “recommending a student pause their studies when the advisor believes it is in the best interests of the student to do so,” “challenging a student’s choice of classes,” and “calling students who have been identified as academically at risk” were all mentioned less frequently. From this, it can be inferred that the respondents believed these four items to be acceptable functions of academic advisors.

(RQ 2) Does This Alignment Vary by Institutional Characteristics of Enrollment Size, Urbanicity, Percentage of Non-Traditional Aged Students, Performance-Funding Award Status, and the Number of NACADA Members at the Institution? This section illustrates the exploration of institution-specific variables and describes patterns (or lack thereof) between these variables and the administrators’ responses. The variables are organized within
the sections of purpose, outcomes, functions, external actors, barriers, and a final section of job analogues, minimum education, and certification.

**Purpose.** Describing the purpose of academic advising is an exercise in justifying the existence of academic advising on a college campus. It explains the rationale for an institution to create an advising unit and also highlights priorities.

**Enrollment Size.** Administrators at institutions with large and medium size enrollment saw guidance with academic and program planning to be the most important purpose of academic advising. While this was valued by administrators at small institutions, there was less of a clear top outlier. This suggests that administrators at medium and large size institutions have more uniformly defined purposes of academic advising than administrators at small institutions.

Administrators at medium and large institutions rated “planning” as the best verb to describe the purpose of academic advising. Administrators at small institutions were split between “transforming” and “supporting.” These responses align with the greater consistency of responses for medium and large institutions and less consistent responses for small institutions. The verb “planning” has a straightforward connotation—a student meets with an advisor to build a plan. In contrast, “transforming” and “supporting” are less demarcated. This suggests that the administrators at smaller institutions view the purposes of academic advising to be more diverse and indeterminate than administrators at medium- and large-sized institutions.

**Urbanicity.** Regarding the top five purposes of academic advising, the rural group held more varied views than the suburb or city group. Data suggest a general consensus that “provide guidance with academic program planning” was the top purpose of academic advising for administrators in the FCS. Administrators at rural institutions favored items such as “enhance the student's self-awareness and personal fulfillment” and “empower students to realize their maximum educational potential” more than the other two groups. The suburb group aligned with the rural group in rating “support and encourage students” as a top five purpose of academic advising, while the city group favored “promote responsible and appropriate choices and facilitate a successful academic experience.” The city and suburb group both favored “help students to approach their education in an organized and meaningful way” more than the rural
group. Overall, these differences were minor. There did not appear to be stark differences regarding the purposes of academic advising across the rural, suburb, and city groups.

For the rural and suburb groups, “supporting” was the most frequently listed verb to describe the purpose of advising. The city group rated “planning” highest, closely followed by “teaching.” The city and suburb groups both viewed “planning” as the second most important verb analogue to the purpose of advising, whereas this item was ranked low by the rural group. “Teaching” was ranked particularly low by the suburban group in comparison to the two other groups. Taken together, this data suggests that administrators at institutions in city settings focus on planning as the purpose of academic advising, administrators at suburban institutions view the purpose of advising as a mix between planning and supporting, and administrators at rural institutions see the purpose of academic advising as transformative, supportive, and a facilitation of individual improvement and fulfillment.

*Percentage of Non-Traditional-Aged Students.* Regarding the purpose of advising, all of the groups rated “provide guidance with academic program planning” as the most frequent and highest-ranked purpose of academic advising. The high non-traditional aged population group listed a broader array of purposes of academic advising than the other two groups—indicating the necessity for a broader range of priorities for serving non-traditional aged students. Regarding the best verb to describe the purpose of academic advising, the low group selected “planning,” the medium group selected “supporting,” and the high group selected “transforming.” This suggests a transition of purpose of academic advising from concrete and pragmatic to symbolic and humanistic as the non-traditional aged student population increases.

*Performance-Based Funding.* The award categories of performance-based funding in the FCS descend in the following order: gold, silver, bronze, purple. The notable difference for the purpose of academic advising was that administrators from gold- and silver-earning institutions indicated two purposes more frequently than the bronze group. These were “assist students in the clarification of their life goals” and “support and encourage students.” While the low number of responses from bronze-earning institutions limits the interpretation of this finding, it could indicate a pattern linking the performance-based categories (student retention, completion, beginning wages, job placement, and continuing education) to the advising purposes related to supporting the holistic development of the student (as opposed to strictly academic purposes).
However, gold institutions placed the highest value on the statement “providing guidance with academic program planning,” lending conflicting evidence to this initial suggestion because it is a more pragmatic item than the other purposes. Also, administrators at bronze institutions rated the item “creating collaborative relationships between the advisor and the student” more frequently, which also conflicts with the rationale for this difference.

In terms of verbs, “planning” was the most common for gold and silver institutions. Bronze institutions were split between all of the verbs except “counseling” and “informing” (which both ranked lowest). This indicates a narrower focus of the purpose of academic advising for institutions that performed better in performance-based funding metrics.

*NACADA Members.* There were no notable differences among administrators’ perceptions of the purpose of academic advising when separated by the number of NACADA members at their institution.

*Overall Group Differences.* Certain categorizations of the respondents yielded patterns of responses that indicate a relationship between institutional factors and administrators’ perceptions of the most important purposes of academic advising. Enrollment size appeared to play a role in shaping administrators’ views toward more humanistic and varied purposes at smaller institutions, whereas pragmatism and a narrower set of purposes emerged for administrators at larger institutions. This observation appears to hold true for urbanicity as well—with urban and suburban schools resembling high- and medium-enrollment institutions and rural institutions following smaller institutional ratings of the purpose of academic advising. Having a high percentage of non-traditional aged students leads to the suggestion that administrators viewed the purposes of academic advising as broader, more humanistic, and more symbolic than their counterparts at institutions with medium and low levels of non-traditional students. While performance-based funding categories appeared to highlight some division of viewpoints, conflicting evidence potentially resulting from a low number of administrators from the bronze and gold categories, may be the true cause of these observed differences. Lastly, NACADA membership did not appear to distinctly relate to any categorical differences amongst administrators.
Outcomes. Describing the outcomes of academic advising is an exercise in demonstrating the end-product of academic advising. It answers the question, “What is the desired result after a student interacts with academic advising?”

Enrollment Size. There was general agreement about the top five outcomes of academic advising across small, medium, and large institutions. “Increased completion of the student’s academic program of study” was the highest ranked outcome across all sizes. This was followed by “increased student retention,” “increased student interaction rates with campus learning and support resources,” and “increased student knowledge of graduation requirements.” Interestingly, several medium-size institutions (four out of the nine) were the only size category to list “increased job placement after graduation” as a top five outcome of academic advising.

Administrators at small-enrollment institutions listed behavioral and affective outcomes as the most desired outcome category. Medium and large institutions favored academic outcomes the most, but medium was more concentrated in these rankings, whereas large ranked behavioral and affective outcomes close to the top as well. Overall, this suggests a general agreement across outcomes, with perhaps some minor variability in the interpretation of how advising practice arrives at those outcomes. At medium and large institutions, administrators report that academic advising yields desired outcomes by shaping the academic performance of students, whereas at small-size institutions administrators believed these outcomes are achieved through behavioral or affective changes catalyzed by the advising interaction.

Urbanicity. There was a consistency of responses regarding the outcomes of academic advising across all three groups. “Increased completion” and “increased retention” were the predominant choices, followed closely by “increased student interaction rates with campus learning and support resources” and “increased student knowledge of graduation requirements.” Job placement and increased student engagement with campus activities were notably mentioned by the suburban group, whereas “increase student Grade Point Averages (GPAs)” and “meet specific learning outcome goals of the department” were noted by the city group.

The rural group ranked student behavioral outcomes as the most accurate outcome category, whereas suburban and city institution administrators ranked student academic outcomes most favorably. However, the magnitude of this distinction is minor, which suggests that the three groups responded similarly to this question.
Percentage of Non-Traditional Aged Students. While there was general agreement about the top outcomes of academic advising across these three groups, “increased student GPAs,” “meet specific learning outcomes set by the advising department” and “increased student engagement with campus activities” were mentioned with slightly more frequency by the high group than the low and mid group. There was also general agreement about the importance of academic and behavioral outcomes. However, the low non-traditional aged group favored cognitive outcomes more than the other two groups. This indicates a preference toward behavioral outcomes when there is a greater population of traditional-aged students.

Performance-Based Funding. Increased retention and completion were the two highest-ranked outcomes for administrators at gold-scoring institutions. The silver-scoring group also rated both of these highly. While these categories were highly rated by bronze institutions as well, it merits noting that “increased student GPAs” was also frequently listed and ranked highly. “Meet specific learning outcomes set by the advising department” was mentioned for gold and silver, but not bronze. This suggests a connection between specific learning outcomes and stronger performance within the performance-based funding model.

The most popular outcome categories were split the same for all three groups between academic, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes.

NACADA Membership. There were no notable differences among administrators’ perceptions of the outcomes of academic advising when separated by the number of NACADA members at their institution.

Overall Comparisons. In contrast to the differences observed regarding the purposes of academic advising, all groups appeared more definitive in their appraisal of the top five outcomes of academic advising—with student retention and completion dominating in both frequency and ranking. The “how” of the outcomes was determined by the second question, which asked respondents to indicate their preference toward different overall categories of student outcomes. This preference was most apparent for enrollment size, with small institutions favoring behavioral and affective outcomes strongly and medium and large institutions favoring academic outcomes strongly. Behavioral outcomes were predominantly ranked higher for rural
institutions, whereas suburban and urban institutions ranked academic outcomes highest. The differences seem to demarcate at the categorization of small and rural colleges. Having a low number of non-traditional aged students appeared to relate to administrators at these institutions rating cognitive outcomes higher than their medium and high non-traditional aged student population counterparts. This suggests an emphasis on the result of academic advising for institutions with a low percentage of non-traditional aged students stems from students learning about campus services. The other groups see this result stemming from students interacting with campus services and improving their academic performance as a result of the interaction with their academic advisor.

**Functions.** Describing the functions of academic advising involves explaining the specific actions that advisors perform in their daily work. While purposes relate to the “why” of an action and outcomes point to the result, functions describe the in-process “what” that occurs to bridge the two other concepts comprising the role of academic advising.

**Enrollment Size.** There was general agreement across enrollment sizes regarding the top functions of academic advising. These included “helping develop a plan of study,” “exploring career interests,” and “communicating degree requirements.” “Helping select a major” was more popular at medium and large institutions. “Helping make career plans” was mentioned most often at medium-size institutions.

A majority of respondents from all size groups agreed that “filing paperwork for a dean” was outside the scope of an advisor’s functions. Administrators from small and medium institutions listed “counseling an upset student” frequently as well. Half of the administrators at small institutions expressed that “building a student’s schedule” was outside the scope of functions of academic advising. Administrators at several medium-size institutions listed “challenging a student’s choice of classes” and “recommending a student pause their studies when the advisor believes it is in the best interests of the student to do so” as functions outside the scope of academic advising. These responses suggest that smaller institutions see course selection as the student’s responsibility and medium institutions are cautious to afford advisors the space to make recommendations that may negatively impact the outcome measures of retention and completion.
**Urbanicity.** There was relative agreement across groups that “help develop a plan of study” and “communicate degree requirements to students” were top functions of academic advising. Regarding functions, “help explore career interests” was a notable outlier for administrators at rural institutions, earning their full support—whereas only half of the members of the suburb and city groups listed it as a top five function of academic advising. Two notable outliers for the suburb group were “help schedule courses” and “connect a student to need-based resources (e.g. food, shelter).” This suggests that administrators at rural institutions value advisors facilitating career exploration, while administrators at suburban institutions illustrate an appreciation for didactically assisting students with course selection and acquiring resources.

Administrators from all urbanicity groups listed “filing paperwork for a dean” as the most prevalent function outside the scope of academic advising. Notably, the suburb group listed more functions as outside the scope of academic advising than the two other groups. The suburb group was the only group to list “challenging a student’s choice of courses” and “recommending a student pause their studies when the advisor believes it is in the best interests of the student to do so” as functions outside the scope of academic advising. This finding parallels the enrollment size finding for medium-sized institutions—possibly indicating a shared influence between these two institutional characteristics.

**Percentage of Non-Traditional Aged Students.** There was general agreement about the top functions of academic advising across the categories of percentage of non-traditional aged students. These mirrored the findings for the overall analysis. Subtle differences emerged regarding exploring career interests, with this item being less popular for the low percentage of non-traditional aged student group. This finding suggests that career exploration becomes more important in the advising interaction at institutions with higher percentages of non-traditional aged students.

The low and mid groups both listed “counseling an upset student” as a function outside the scope of academic advising, whereas this was not listed by the high group. This suggests that administrators from institutions with high populations of non-traditional aged students may see the advisor’s role as extending beyond academics toward more holistic student services.

**Performance-Based Funding.** All three groups shared a similar frequency and ranking for the following functions of academic advising (in order of frequency and ranking): “help
develop a plan of study,” “communicate degree requirements to students,” “help explore career interests,” and “help select a major.” Notably, gold institutions did not mention “help schedule courses” or “help with course registration,” whereas bronze institutions did not indicate “connect a student to need-based resources.” While this should be interpreted cautiously, it could indicate that one explanation for bronze-level institutions’ performance was a lack of advisor responsibility toward functions that meet students’ basic needs.

All groups agreed that “filing paperwork for a dean” was a function outside the scope of academic advising. “Counseling an upset student” and “recommending a student pause their studies” were both infrequently mentioned. Silver institutions also listed “building a schedule for a student” and “challenging a student’s choice of classes.”

*NACADA Membership.* There were no notable differences among administrators’ perceptions of the functions of academic advising when separated by the number of NACADA members at their institution.

*(RQ3) What External Actors, Barriers, Job Analogues, Minimum Education Requirements, and Future Certification Requirements Do Administrators Identify in the Context of the Role of Academic Advisors at Their Institution?* This section presents the analysis of the responses relating to the external actors, barriers, job analogues, minimum education requirements, and future certification requirements relating to the role of the academic advisors at their institution. Additionally, this section presents analysis of these responses when grouped by institutional characteristics.

*External Actors.* After questions relating to the purpose, outcomes, and function of academic advising, the next survey question asked respondents about the influence of external actors on their responses. Four items were ranked as highly influential by at least half of the respondents. These items were “institutional mission, vision, and goals” (n = 17), “meeting retention/completion goals” (n = 16), “increasing student gateway course completion” (n = 15), and “following state statutory requirements related to academic advising” (n = 10). Three items predominantly fell within the somewhat influential category. These included “increasing student post-graduation wages” (n = 15), “increasing student continuing education” (n = 6), and “increasing student post-graduation employment” (n = 15). Two items predominantly fell in the
minimally influential category. These included “NACADA: The Global Community for academic advising communications, publications, and resources” and “other professional organizations (e.g. NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education; American College Personnel Association).” This suggests that institutional goals, retention and completion, and the policy environment affected administrators’ beliefs the most, whereas professional organizations yielded the least amount of reported influence.

**Barriers.** Many respondents indicated three significant barriers to meeting the ideal purposes, outcomes, and goals of the academic advising program at their institutions. These included “caseload size” \( (n = 15) \), “lack of financial resources” \( (n=10) \), and “advisor turnover” \( (n = 8) \). One item emerged as a somewhat significant barrier: “lack of technology” \( (n = 11) \). Two items were listed predominantly as a minimal barrier. These were “lack of advisor competency” \( (n=11) \) and “lack of advisor training and development” \( (n = 11) \).

**Job Analogues, Minimum Education, Certification.** Respondents chose “coach” \( (n = 9) \) most frequently as the job most closely related to academic advising. This was followed by career advisor \( (n = 4) \), teacher \( (n = 3) \), counselor \( (n=3) \), and social worker \( (n = 1) \). No one career analogue was perceived to be a dominant career analogue, suggesting malleability in the construction of the role of academic advising at FCS institutions.

The minimum education requirement to practice academic advising was split between a bachelor’s degree \( (n = 13) \) and master’s degree \( (n = 6) \). Associates degree was mentioned once, and no respondents indicated high school diploma or doctoral degree.

Regarding whether certification should be required to practice advising, the group was nearly equally split between: “strongly agree” and “agree” \( (n = 8) \); “neutral” \( (n = 5) \); and “strongly disagree” and “disagree” \( (n = 7) \). This suggests no overall pattern of beliefs about certification amongst upper level administrators in the FCS.

**Institutional Characteristics and External Actors.** This section addresses how institutional characteristics related to administrator’s reports of the impact of external actors on their views of the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. In other words, the purpose of this section is to explore which external actors are considered by administrators when they make decisions about the academic advising unit at their institution.
**Enrollment Size.** There was agreement between administrators across institution sizes that “meeting retention/completion goals,” “the institutional mission, vision, and goals,” and “increasing student gateway course completions” were all highly influential external influences on the academic advising program at their institution. Small and medium institutions also frequently listed “following state statutory requirements related to academic advising (i.e. SB 1720)” as highly influential. “Increasing student continuing education” was frequently cited by administrators at small institutions as a highly influential factor influencing academic advising at their institution. “Increasing student post-graduation employment” and “increasing student post-graduation wages” were viewed as somewhat influential. “NACADA communications, publications, and resources” was rated as somewhat influential by administrators at medium-size institutions, whereas small and large institutions’ administrators rated it as minimally influential. Overall, this suggests widespread agreement across the three external actors of retention, completion, and institutional direction while highlighting differences relating to the importance of student continuing education in shaping administrators’ views of the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. Notably, NACADA appears to play an inconsequential role for small and large institutions—and may play minor roles in shaping the views of administrators at medium-size institutions. Other professional organizations do not appear to have a significant influence on how the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising are viewed by administrators.

**Urbanicity.** There was relative agreement amongst the groups that “meeting retention/completion goals” and “institutional mission, vision, and goals” were highly influential. The suburb and city groups both cited “increasing student gateway course completions” as highly influential, whereas this was rated as somewhat influential by administrators at rural institutions. All groups found increasing student wages and employment to be somewhat influential factors. While the rural group rated NACADA publications as somewhat influential, the suburb and city group rated it predominantly as minimally influential. This held true for other professional organizations as well. Increasing student continuing education was viewed as minimally influential by the city group.

**Percentage of Non-Traditional aged Students.** There were no notable differences in how each group rated the external actors.
**Performance-Based Funding.** The ratings of administrators from gold-scoring institutions were focused on three external factors: “meeting retention/completion goals,” “institutional mission, vision, and goals,” and “increasing student gateway course completions.” Administrators at silver-scoring and bronze-scoring institutions shared preferences toward these factors but also listed “following state statutory requirements related to academic advising (i.e. SB 1720).” Silver-scoring institutions rated “increasing student continuing education” highly. Notably, NACADA was stated as being more impactful for gold and silver institutions. Increasing post-graduation wages was more impactful for bronze and silver institutions than gold institutions. Overall, these findings suggest that statutory guidelines may play a larger role in shaping the practice of academic advising at institutions that are more negatively affected by the guidelines. Additionally, NACADA, while still rated overall as minimally impactful, was rated higher at higher-scoring institutions.

**NACADA Members.** Having more NACADA members did not appear to be linked with higher ratings of the impact of NACADA.

**Institutional Characteristics and Barriers.** This section reports the responses to an item on the survey that prompted respondents to rank potential barriers to reaching the ideal purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising at their institution.

**Enrollment Size.** For administrators across all institutional sizes, caseload size was listed as a significant barrier. Administrators at small and medium institutions also commonly listed a lack of financial resources as a significant barrier. Administrators at large institutions listed this as somewhat of a barrier. A notable number—but not a majority—of administrators from all groups listed advisor turnover as a significant barrier. Lack of technology was viewed by administrators at small and medium-sized institutions as somewhat of a barrier. Lack of advisor training and development was mentioned as somewhat of a barrier by administrators at small institutions. However, lack of advisor training and development and lack of advisor competency were most commonly rated as minimally significant. A noteworthy number of administrators at medium-sized institutions rated a lack of technology as a minimal barrier. Taken together, these findings suggest variability in the barriers that institutions experience based on enrollment size.
**Urbanicity.** Regarding barriers, there was agreement across all levels of urbanicity that caseload size was a significant barrier. While the rural and suburban group also reported a lack of financial resources to be a significant barrier, the city group listed this item most frequently as somewhat of a barrier. Lack of technology was universally viewed as somewhat of a barrier. Advisor turnover was ranked as a minimal barrier by the rural and suburb group, whereas city institutions tended to list it in between a significant barrier and somewhat of a barrier. Advisor turnover was more significant for administrators at city institutions, whereas it was rated as a minimal barrier by the rural and suburb groups. Lack of training and development and advisor competency were ranked low by all groups. In total, this suggests that caseload size affected all groups equally, whereas financial resources, technology, and turnover were considered to be different levels of barriers by the respondents based upon the urbanicity of their campuses.

**Percentage of Non-Traditional aged Students.** Referencing barriers, caseload size was a significant barrier for low and mid groups but not high groups. The same stood for a lack of financial resources. Lack of advising competency was unanimously the lowest-rated barrier. There was a subtle difference for a lack of advisor professional development—with it being a greater concern of administrators from the high group. Advisor turnover appeared to be a more significant barrier for administrators with medium and high percentages of non-traditional aged students. Overall, the high group had fewer significant barriers than the mid or low group. This suggests that having a higher percentage of non-traditional aged students may bring barriers into the forefront of an administrator’s mind (e.g. advisor turnover) other than caseload size and financial resources.

**Performance-Based Funding.** Caseload size was viewed as a more significant barrier for gold and silver institutions. A lack of financial resources was mentioned prominently for silver institutions. Advisor turnover was frequently mentioned for the gold and bronze groups as a significant barrier. Lack of technology and advisor training and development were listed as somewhat of a barrier by all three groups. Lack of advisor competency was listed as a minimal barrier by all three groups.

**NACADA Members.** Having more NACADA members did not appear to be linked with an identifiable pattern by which administrators ranked barriers.
Institutional Characteristics and Job Analogues, Minimum Education, and Certification. This section of the survey required respondents to report which alternative occupation most closely resembled academic advising, the minimum education required to practice academic advising, and whether advisors should require certification in order to practice advising.

Enrollment Size. The occupational analogues showcased notable differences between administrators at different sized institutions. Administrators at both large and medium institutions listed “coach” as the most popular career analogue to academic advising. However, as a second choice, administrators at large institutions selected the occupations of “social worker” and “counselor,” while administrators at medium-size institutions selected “career advisor” frequently. “Teacher” was the most favored analogue for administrators at small institutions, with “counselor” and “career advisor” mentioned once each. This appears to demonstrate a pattern of occupational roles that is more individual-based and humanistic for large- and medium-size institutions and a role that is more group-based and pedagogical for smaller institutions. Across all institutional sizes, a bachelor’s degree was the most frequently cited educational credential needed to practice academic advising. There did not appear to be differences across institutional sizes; however, it is notable that an associate’s degree was listed only once, and this was by an administrator at a large institution.

There is no consensus about whether advisors should need certification to practice advising. However, evidence indicates a link between beliefs about the minimum educational credential and views on advising certification. Those who listed master’s degree as the required educational credential more commonly agreed that advisors should possess certification.

Urbanicity. “Teacher” was the most prominent analogue career to academic advising for administrators in the rural group, whereas “coach” was the predominant choice for the suburb and city groups. “Career advisor” appeared with moderate frequency for the suburb group, whereas the other options were selected equally by the city group. The suburb and city group favored a bachelor’s degree and were mixed in their beliefs about advisor certification, whereas the rural group favored a master’s degree and trended toward favoring certification.
Percentage of Non-Traditional aged Students. “Coach” was the occupational analogue mentioned by administrators from all groups. The low group favored “career advisor” as a second most popular analogue, whereas the high group favored “teacher.” The most frequently cited minimum educational credential was a bachelor’s degree. While low and mid groups favored advisor certification, the high group was evenly split.

**Percentage of Non-Traditional Aged Students.** For the high group, the analogue careers were distributed relatively evenly, with two institutions each selecting “Coach” and “Teacher” respectively, and one institution each selecting “Social Worker” and “Counselor” respectively. The medium group had a concentration of four institutions selecting “Coach” and one institution each selecting “Counselor”, “Teacher”, and “Career advisor” respectively. The low group demonstrated a split preference for “Coach” and “Career advisor”, with three institutions each selecting those respective responses. “Counselor” was selected once for the low group. There did not appear to be differences in beliefs about the minimum degree requirements across different groups of institutions based on their percentage of non-traditional aged students. Regarding certification, administrators from institutions with low percentages of non-traditional aged students demonstrated a preference against certification. The low and medium groups were evenly split in their support of favoring versus not favoring advisor certification.

**Performance-Based Funding.** "Teacher” and “coach" were the two most popular choices for administrators from bronze institutions respectively. Gold listed “coach” and “career advisor.” “Coach” was most prevalent for silver institutions, but “career advisor” was mentioned second most, followed by “counselor,” and then “teacher” and “social worker.” Regarding minimum education, bronze-earning institutions favored bachelor’s and associate’s degrees, silver favored bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and gold favored bachelor’s degrees. Administrators from bronze institutions tended to disagree for certification, and administrators from gold institutions were split between neutral and strongly disagree. Administrators from silver institutions were split evenly amongst the possible answers.

**NACADA Members.** The job analogue of “coach” was mentioned far less for the “none” group than the “a few” or “several” group. The “none” group listed “career advisor” three times
and “teacher” twice. This indicates that the job analogue of the advisor trends toward coach as the number of NACADA members increases at an institution.

Summary

Administrators in this study generally saw the purpose of advising as facilitating planning, goal-setting, decision-making, and academic success. This differs from other established purposes of academic advising that were less concrete, such as creating student personal fulfillment. The reasons for these choices varied, so there were no notable patterns of reasoning for these responses. The outcomes of academic advising are even more closely clustered around retention and completion. This represents the primacy of product-based outcome measures (e.g. completion) over process-based outcome measures (e.g. student satisfaction with academic advising). An additionally notable finding is that these high-ranking outcomes represented academic outcomes, not career outcomes. The functions of academic advising represent the melding of the purposes and outcomes favored by administrators by illustrating a prioritization of students developing a plan of study, communicating degree requirements, and selecting a major. It is clear that the perceived work of the advisor is to meet the needs of the student. This is evidenced by the less frequent selection of items relating to the professional development, campus service, and scholarly contributions of the advisor.

Aggregating the data based on institutional factors yielded insights beyond these generalizations about the FCS as a whole. While each institutional characteristic was explored independently, it is highly likely that any relationship between the administrator perceptions and institutional characteristics reflects a combination of interactions across these characteristics. Evidence suggests that certain institutional characteristics are related to patterns of beliefs about the role of the academic advisor. For example, administrators from smaller institutions tended to report a more developmental approach to the advisor’s service to students, whereas larger institutions indicated meeting more basic needs of the student in a more prescriptive manner. One possible explanation for this difference is that smaller institutions typically have smaller caseloads for advisors (NACADA, 2011). This lower caseload has been connected with an advisor’s ability to deliver developmental advising (Robbins, 2013). Therefore, caseload, rather than institutional size, may be driving the capacity of an advising unit to deliver a developmental advising curriculum. Urbanicity appeared to track closely with enrollment size, with rural
colleges following the responses of smaller colleges. The percentage of non-traditional aged students also appeared to relate to administrators’ views of the role of the academic advisor, with higher percentages showcasing responses that highlighted meeting student needs beyond academics. Performance-based funding scores and the number of NACADA members did not appear to relate to any notable patterns in administrators’ responses.

The most impactful external actors were the institutional mission, vision, and goals, retention and completion, and statutory requirements. This suggests that the institution, academic outcome goals, and legislative requirements influence the purpose, outcomes, and functions of advising in the FCS the most. On the other hand, findings strongly demonstrate that NACADA and other external organizations did not demonstrably shape administrators’ views of the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising. Barriers that worked in opposition to realizing the ideals of the role of the academic advisor included caseload size, a lack of financial resources, and, to a lesser extent, advisor turnover. As it is likely that caseload size and a lack of financial resources exist reciprocally, it is clear that the findings suggest that under-resourcing academic advising is viewed as the predominant reason why institutions in the FCS cannot meet the idealized roles of academic advisors at their institutions. Regarding job analogues, minimum education requirements, and certification, the respondents listed “coach” most frequently, felt a bachelor’s degree was most appropriate, and were split about requiring certification.

**Implications**

A unified definition of the role of the academic advisor remains elusive in higher education (Aiken-Wisniewski, Johnson, Larson, & Barkemeyer, 2015), and administrators have considerable power in shaping the role of academic advisors (Bridgen, 2017; Park, Tandberg, Hu, & Hankerson, 2016). This research supported the conclusion that there are patterns in the way administrators view the purpose, outcomes, functions, external actors, barriers, job analogues, minimum education, and certification requirements of academic advising. Regarding the FCS, the findings of this study indicate that there are more commonalities than differences regarding administrator beliefs about the roles of academic advisors within this system. This shared view illustrates an advisor’s role wherein the purposes and functions are to meet student academic outcome goals.
The ranked purposes, outcomes, and functions represent austere conceptualizations of an academic advisor as an entity who assists a student by offering recommendations, instructing about processes, and checking/building plans. The majority of administrators surveyed valued goals (outcomes) of advising which prioritize retaining and graduating as many students as possible. There was very little support for a role of an advisor that represented more professional, complex, or developmental work. This was evidenced by more professional functions, such as professional development, scholarship, and committee service to the college, being ranked far less frequently and much lower than functions that directly related to student academic outcomes (e.g. choosing a major).

While NACADA proclaimed “advising is teaching” (Schulenberg et al., 2008), a majority of the administrators in the FCS would disagree. Rather, administrators in the FCS view the role of an advisor as “coaching,” which connotes very different work from teaching. A teacher develops a curriculum to increase and enhance a student’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions. On the other hand, a coach is most concerned with maximizing performance. While a teacher cares about performance, it is not at the forefront of the purpose of the pedagogy. Shifting this analogy back to academic advising, the advisor as a coach focuses on student academic performance, whereas the advisor as a teacher has a primary focus on student developmental growth.

Perhaps more concerning is the finding that NACADA and other organizations outside the institution appeared to exert little influence over how administrators conceptualized the role of the academic advisors at their institution. Additionally, the more professionalized functions of academic advising were mentioned very infrequently by FCS administrators. One potential explanation for this finding is that advising, at least in the FCS context, may not be viewed as a profession by administrators, and therefore, the associated professional organizations do not merit consideration. Although efforts have been made to professionalize academic advising (McGill, 2019), perhaps these efforts have been unsuccessful thus far. There is no guarantee that academic advising is a bona fide profession, and administrators will likely play a large part in determining whether this status is ever achieved.

Previous scholarship has indicated that the role of the academic advisor varies across and within institutions (Bridgen, 2017; Habley et al., 2012). Understanding if and how that role specifically varies based on institutional characteristics was an unexplored phenomenon. The
main implication of this study is that there appear to be certain institutional characteristics that relate to certain roles of the academic advisor. For example, small and rural colleges tended to take a more developmental, widespread, and pedagogical approach to the role of the advisor, whereas larger and more urban institutions favored a focus on academic achievement. One potential explanation for this finding is that smaller schools create a more intimate environment, one that may be further reinforced in a rural area when those same characteristics are shared by the surrounding population. Another explanation is that the needs of the students vary based on institution characteristics, thereby driving the role of the advisor. Non-traditional aged populations pose different needs (Karmelita, 2020); therefore, it stands to reason that the advising role would adapt accordingly.

Interestingly, NACADA, and other organizations, appears to play a small role in shaping how administrators in the FCS conceptualize the role of the academic advisors at their institutions. Rather, local and state pressures clearly hold more influence. This dampened level of professional organizations’ influence may explain why the roles of the academic advisor focus on student service and academic outcomes over advisor scholarship, professional development, and more developmental interactions with students. This entry-level definition of the work of advising tracks with the typical level of work performed by those with a bachelor’s degree and explains the overall preference for it as a minimum degree requirement. The one finding that contrasts this rationale is the split sentiments regarding whether advisors should possess certification. Certification would connote a certain level of professionalization, whereas the other findings indicate less support for advising as a profession.

While general agreement was prevalent in administrator’s ratings of aspects of the role of academic advisors, some findings indicated patterns of difference between institutional categories. However, given the limited number of institutions in each category of this study, additional research is warranted before drawing broader conclusions. That established, there is value to further exploring how enrollment size, urbanicity, and the percentage of non-traditional aged students relates to administrators’ views of the role of academic advisor across a broader sample.

Discussion

The administrators’ responses indicated that institutional influence (as stated in the mission and vision of the college) and legislation both shaped the role of academic advising at
their institution. Studies indicate that the developmental education reform affected advising in FCS institutions by increasing the demand for advising without an equivalent increase in advising resources (Woods et al., 2017). This study supports the conclusion that these external actors, alongside performance-based funding pressures, have exerted considerable influence over the role of academic advisors in the FCS. Interestingly, not all aspects of performance-based funding (e.g., job placement) factored into administrators’ priorities for the role of academic advisors. However, the clear primacy of retention and completion as the top outcomes of academic advising suggests some relationship between this legislation and the role of academic advising. Notably, how an institution performed regarding performance-based funding did not appear to relate to a pattern of role conceptualization of academic advising. Therefore, the mere presence of the metrics, rather than the outcomes of the metrics, may be influencing how the role of academic advisors in the FCS is constructed. This environment of limited resources, increasing work demands, and prioritization of retention and completion likely translates to an advising role that misses the more developmental goals of advising. Instead of holding discussions with students about how their curricular choices relate to their educational, personal, and career goals, advisors are pressured to meet mandatory requirements and metrics for retention and completion.

Many of the responses from the administrators in this survey about the role of academic advisor illustrated traits of a paraprofession rather than full-fledged profession. Within advising, scholarship is a pivotal component that distinguishes a paraprofession from a profession (McGill, 2019; Habley, 2009). The administrators predominantly prioritized pragmatic purposes, outcomes, and functions of the advisor’s role and did not indicate strong support for professional development, scholarship, or reflective practices. It becomes difficult to determine the ideal practices of advising when practitioners are not encouraged to develop scholarship as part of their role.

Wilensky’s (1964) stage model of professionalization, within the formal code of ethics stage, discusses, “emphasiz[ing] the service ideal” which represents the conceptualization of the ideal practices of a given profession (p. 145). Furthermore, the author illustrates the challenge of meeting this ideal in complex organizations wherein “bosses, not colleagues, rule” (p.146). The conceptualization of the role of academic advising in the FCS represents a service ideal constructed by the administrators, not the leading global authority that has sought to define
academic advising. This raises concerns over which entity defines the “service ideal” of academic advising? Is it the advising community, represented by NACADA? Is it the leadership at the college? Is it the governing forces of a state system of colleges? Is it the advisors themselves? This study generated evidence to suggest it will be difficult to arrive at a unified “service ideal” of academic advising across all of these parties.

When such discordant views are present, how does this tension resolve? One example worth exploring comes from the related field of school counseling. In the late 1990s, there was widespread evidence to suggest that many principals were asking school counselors to perform tasks that were outside the scope of their professional work (as defined by the American School Counselor Association [ASCA]) (e.g. Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2008). In response, ASCA (2003) created the first edition of the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. While this document shares many similarities with NACADA’s publications of the *Core Competencies, Core Values, Statement of Academic Advising*, and *CAS Standards*, one notable difference is that the *ASCA National Model* specifically delineated “noncounseling activities” (ASCA, 2003, p. 167). This list contained the most frequent duties school counselors were asked to perform that were outside the scope of their work (e.g. classroom coverage). While the field of school counseling still has much ground to cover in terms of reconciling the vision of school counseling set forth by ASCA and the local vision articulated by principals, the *ASCA National Model* gave school counselors a foundation from which to define the scope of their work. While this action from a professional organization may not have been the entire reason why, there is little argument that school counseling is a profession.

This example is far from an exact comparison. There is scant literature to suggest that advisors are being asked to perform duties far outside of the scope of their work. Additionally, advisors currently do not require licensure to practice like school counselors, and it appears there are shared outcome goals for advising between NACADA and the FCS – student retention and completion. However, the advising literature suggests there are more outcomes beyond these two listed for academic advising. For example, these outcomes include reaching specific learning outcomes such as the student possessing an understanding of how their curricular choices relate to their career goal, citizenship, and life purpose.

For FCS administrators, this study indicated that the top aspects of the role of the academic advisor reflected pragmatic exercises designed to assist a student with planning,
deciding, and goal-setting, ultimately improving a student’s chances of reaching academic success. Scholars of advising would likely argue this illustration to be a reduction of the ideal purpose, outcomes, and functions of academic advising (e.g. Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Rather advising is an “academic endeavor… [with a] locus of learning…[that is] integrative, and helps students make meaning out of their education as a whole” (Lowenstein, 2014, pp. 10-11). Another definition states, “academic advising applies knowledge of the field to empower students and campus and community members to successfully navigate academic interactions related to higher education” (Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, Barkemeyer, 2018, p. 86).

Within both of these conceptualizations of academic advising, there exists greater nuance and depth to the work of academic advising than the roles most prized by a majority of administrators in this study.

Ultimately, the conceptualizations of academic advising by NACADA and the FCS are not diametrically opposed. Instead, the difference seems to be in sharpness and depth. NACADA exists to build the profession of academic advising and, therefore, spends virtually all of its resources focusing on academic advising. The FCS and its administrators, on the other hand, have a much broader set of priorities, pressures, and considerations. An administrator faces reconciling myriad (and often polarizing) factors to meet the institution's needs. When faced with understanding a system far too complex for one individual to comprehend, simplification is necessary. It is possible that in reconciling all these factors, the conceptualization of academic advising has been oversimplified—especially with regard to the outcome goals of advising.

One recommendation is continued reflection on the role of academic advising in the FCS. Deeper collaboration between FCS administrators and NACADA could help build an understanding of the aspects of academic advising that reach beyond student plans, retention, and completion yet acknowledge the local needs of each FCS institution. The body of knowledge of advising methods, theories, and effects on students continues to grow, and it is likely that many administrators have not come across the most recent findings. NACADA and the FCS stand to benefit from these conversations by co-developing a modern and informed role of academic advising.

A second way to reflect on the role of academic advising in the FCS is to consider increasing advisors’ professional autonomy. There is value to giving advisors the professional
discretion to define the goals of their practice. By uplifting the practice of academic advising to a professional level (through elevating its status on campuses, increasing requirements for entry to the job, and granting more decisional autonomy), administrators are freed from the necessity of having to understand every detail of academic advising. However, in this scenario, the institution still stands to reap the benefits from highly effective academic advising. Suppose advisors were given the same professional latitude that many professors possess. In that case, advising could then reach the basic outcomes of retention and completion while allowing for even more ambitious outcomes to be pursued. Building this foundation of professional trust raises the possibilities for academic advising to reach its full potential as an agent of positive student change on college campuses.

At present, the conditions appear ripe for role conflict and ambiguity to surface in the work of academic advisors in the FCS. Role conflict represents a role expectation that goes against a standard expectation of a role, and role ambiguity represents a lack of understanding about the clarity of one’s role (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). When present, role conflict and ambiguity can lead to anxiety and turnover (Rizzo, et al., 1970). Advisors in the FCS presently must choose between a pragmatic role espoused by their administrators and an idealized role espoused by NACADA. Ignoring this discrepancy may lead to the negative consequences that occur when role conflict and ambiguity are present. However, identifying this discrepancy presents an opportunity to align the role of academic advisors in the FCS. These role conceptualizations, while currently disparate, are not mutually exclusive. Coordination between the FCS and NACADA can lead to an advisor role that accomplishes the pragmatic goals of increasing student retention and completion while affording the profession latitude for advisors to develop their capacities in advising practice and scholarship.

The stakes for this coordination to occur are high. Evidence suggests an impending enrollment decline in higher education (Bransberger & Michelau, 2017) and the effects of the recent pandemic on student needs are not yet fully known. While advisor workloads have risen in the FCS as a result of SB 1720, there was not an equivalent increase in resources (Woods, 2017). This change likely resulted in less advising time for each student, which in turn reduced the quality and positive effects of academic advising (Karp and Stacey, 2013). One possible explanation for this pattern of events is that, within the FCS, the role of academic advisor is not receiving the valuation and resource allocation it deserves as a profession. Given the importance
of academic advising on student achievement, allowing this devaluation of academic advising to continue is dangerous for students and for the institution. However, there is opportunity for the reverse to occur. An investment in quality academic advising might be one key action to help mitigate the upcoming challenges facing the FCS.

**Dissemination Plan**

The primary stakeholders in this study were the advisors and executive-level administrators in the Florida College System (FCS) with a direct supervisory line to academic advising. The findings of this study will be shared as a one-page executive summary with the executive-level administrators in the FCS. This summary will be distributed via the Florida Department of Education’s Council of Student Affairs (FLDOECSA) email listserv. This distribution method will allow the opportunity for feedback and, if merited, could lead to a more in-depth presentation of the findings and implications at a FLDOECSA quarterly meeting.

The secondary-level stakeholders in this study are the other service providers in each institution of the FCS, as well as executive administrators in the Florida College System. The executive-level administrators in the FCS with a direct supervisory line to academic advising (a primary stakeholder) will be encouraged to share the executive summary of this study with colleagues they believe would benefit from understanding the implications of these findings. Regarding the executive administrators of the FCS, they will receive the executive summary through the FLDOECSA email listserv. Additionally, because these individuals will also have assisted with the distribution of the survey relating to this study, I plan to individually communicate the findings and implications of this study with the director of the Florida Student Success Center and the Director of Student Affairs via phone conversations. In-person or virtual presentations will be made available for those with a high interest.

The tertiary-level stakeholders are the global community of academic advisors, as the findings from this study could inform the entire field. The findings and implications of this study will be communicated to executive-level leaders in the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) initially through email as a one-page executive summary and via phone conversations if warranted. These stakeholders specifically include the Executive Director of NACADA and the Director of the NACADA Center for Research at Kansas State University. Proposals for one-hour presentations at the NACADA Regional and National conferences will be
submitted. Given the value of research in advising, there is a strong likelihood that these proposals will be accepted. Additionally, portions of this study may inform publications in the *NACADA Journal*.

Overall, I intend to provide recommendations for the improvement of academic advising services to administrators of advising both within and outside the FCS. Despite its importance in fostering student academic success, the field of academic advising has struggled with defining its identity in higher education. The findings and implications of this study will help identify the gaps between “real” and “ideal” advising, hopefully resulting in improved advising services for students.
APPENDIX A

NACADA ACADEMIC ADVISING CORE COMPETENCIES MODEL

Core Competency Areas

Conceptual

1. The history and role of academic advising in higher education.
2. NACADA's Core Values of Academic Advising.
3. Theory relevant to academic advising.
4. Academic advising approaches and strategies.
5. Expected outcomes of academic advising.
6. How equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained.

Informational

1. Institution specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture.
2. Curriculum, degree programs, and other academic requirements and options.
3. Institution specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations.
4. Legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy regulations and confidentiality.
5. The characteristics, needs, and experiences of major and emerging student populations.
6. Campus and community resources that support student success.
7. Information technology applicable to relevant advising roles.

Relational

1. Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising.
2. Create rapport and build academic advising relationships.
3. Communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner.
4. Plan and conduct successful advising interactions.
5. Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum.
6. Facilitate problem solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting.
APPENDIX B

NACADA CORE VALUES OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

Caring

Academic advisors respond to and are accessible to others in ways that challenge, support, nurture, and teach. Advisors build relationships through empathetic listening and compassion for students, colleagues, and others.

Commitment

Academic advisors value and are dedicated to excellence in all dimensions of student success. Advisors are committed to students, colleagues, institutions, and the profession through assessment, scholarly inquiry, life-long learning, and professional development.

Empowerment

Academic advisors motivate, encourage, and support students and the greater educational community to recognize their potential, meet challenges, and respect individuality.

Inclusivity

Academic advisors respect, engage, and value a supportive culture for diverse populations. Advisors strive to create and support environments that consider the needs and perspectives of students, institutions, and colleagues through openness, acceptance, and equity.

Integrity

Academic advisors act intentionally in accordance with ethical and professional behavior developed through reflective practice. Advisors value honesty, transparency, and accountability to the student, institution, and the advising profession.

Professionalism

Academic advisors act in accordance with the values of the profession of advising for the greater good of students, colleagues, institutions, and higher education in general.

Respect

Academic advisors honor the inherent value of all students. Advisors build positive relationships by understanding and appreciating students’ views and cultures, maintaining a student-centered approach and mindset, and treating students with sensitivity and fairness.
APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

STUDY00001341 has been approved

ramp-irb@fsu.edu <ramp-irb@fsu.edu>
Tue 5/13/2020 11:58 AM
To: Mark Duslak

Notification of Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To:</th>
<th>Mark Duslak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Link:</td>
<td>STUDY00001341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.I.:</td>
<td>Mark Duslak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Resolving Ambiguity in Advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>This submission has been approved. To review additional details, click the link above to access the project workspace. You can access the correspondence letter using the following link:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correspondence_for_STUDY00001341.pdf(0.01)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that you will receive an approval notification when each participating site is approved to commence the research.

The FSU IRB supports your research goals. For assistance completing the SmartForm or for technical assistance with RAMP, please email ramp-irb@fsu.edu
APPENDIX D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Administrator Perceptions of Academic Advising Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study titled Administrator perceptions of Academic Advising. This study is being conducted by Mark Duslak, and has received approval from the Internal Review Board at Florida State University (IRB # 00001341).

The purpose of this online survey is to explore administrator perceptions of the appropriate roles and functions of academic advisors. All executive-level administrators in the Florida College System are invited to participate in this survey.

This survey/questionnaire will ask about your beliefs of the appropriate roles and functions of academic advisors and it will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary.

You may not directly benefit from this research; however, we hope that your participation in the study will advance our understanding of the normative roles of academic advisors. This, in turn, may result in student benefits as the field of academic advising improves. We believe there are minimal risks associated with this research study; however, a risk of breach of confidentiality always exists, and we have taken the steps to minimize this risk as outlined in a section below.

Your answers in this study will remain confidential to the extent allowed by law. We will minimize any risks by deleting all identifying information (name, institution, email, etc.) once the data is collected. Each participant will be assigned a unique id which will be linked to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Data will then be analyzed and reported in aggregate. Once the identifying information is removed, it would be impossible to link individual answers back to a specific participant.
There is no compensation for participation in this research study. However, the results of the survey and analysis will be provided to participants in advance of publication.

If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences if you revoke your intention to participate.

By completing this survey, you indicate your consent to participate in this research. If you have questions about this project or encounter problems with the survey, you may contact the Principal investigator, Mark Duslak, at [phone number redacted]. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Florida State University Office for Human Subjects Protection at humansubjects@fsu.edu.

**Part I. Purposes of Academic Advising**

1-1. A purpose is the reason why something is done. Select or write in the five most important purposes of academic advising.

   a) Enhance the student's self-awareness and fulfillment  
   b) Empower students to realize their maximum educational potential  
   c) Assist students in the clarification of their life/career goals  
   d) Provide guidance with academic program planning  
   e) Help students to approach their education in an organized and meaningful way  
   f) Promote responsible and appropriate choices and facilitate a successful academic experience  
   g) Teach students to understand the meaning of higher education  
   h) Teach students to understand the purpose of the curriculum  
   i) Foster students’ intellectual and personal development toward academic success and lifelong learning  
   j) Plan for internships and employment opportunities  
   k) Support and encourage students  
   l) Create a collaborative relationship between a student and an academic advisor  
   m) ________________  
   n) ________________

1-2. Rank the priority of these five items from most to least important

   a) Piped text from answer 5  
   b) Piped text from answer 5  
   c) Piped text from answer 5  
   d) Piped text from answer 5  
   e) Piped text from answer 5

1-3. What did you consider when identifying the top purposes of academic advising?
1-4. Which verb most closely describes the purpose of academic advising? Rank these items.
   a) Teaching
   b) Supporting
   c) Informing
   d) Transforming
   e) Counseling
   f) Planning

Part II. Outcomes of Academic Advising

2-1. An outcome is the desired result of an activity. List the five most important outcomes of academic advising:
   a) Increased completion of the students’ academic program of study
   b) Increased student retention
   c) Increased student wages after graduation
   d) Increased student job placement after graduation
   e) Increased student GPAs
   f) Meet specific learning outcomes set by the advising department
   g) Student satisfaction with advising
   h) Increased student interaction rates with campus learning and support resources
   i) Increased student knowledge of graduation requirements
   j) Increased student engagement with campus activities
   k) __________________
   l) __________________

2-2. Rank the priority of these five items from most to least important
   a) Piped text from answer 5
   b) Piped text from answer 5
   c) Piped text from answer 5
   d) Piped text from answer 5
   e) Piped text from answer 5

2-3. What did you consider when identifying the top outcomes of academic advising?

2-4. What category of outcomes most resembles the outcomes for academic advising at your institution?
   a) Student Behavioral Outcomes
   b) Student Cognitive Outcomes
   c) Student Affective Outcomes
   d) Student Post-Graduation Outcomes
   e) Student Academic Outcomes
Part III. Functions of Academic Advising

3-1. A function is the work performed. List the five most important functions of academic advising:
   a) Help develop plan of study
   b) Help schedule courses
   c) Help with course registration
   d) Serve on committees
   e) Act as a liaison to an academic department
   f) Help select a major
   g) Help explore career interests
   h) Help make career plans
   i) Help explore world of work information
   j) Participate in new student orientation
   k) Participate in student recruitment
   l) Teach (including freshmen seminar courses)
      a) Communicate degree requirements to students
      b) Communicate institutional policies to students
      c) Provide mental health counseling
      d) Connect a student to need-based resources (i.e. food, shelter)
      e) Participate in professional development activities (i.e. attending a conference)
      f) Conduct action research on advising
      g) Reflect on advising practice
      h) Serve on campus committees
      i) ___________________
      j) ___________________

3-2. Rank the priority of these five items from most to least important
   a) Piped text from answer 1a
   b) Piped text from answer 1b
   c) Piped text from answer 1c
   d) Piped text from answer 1d
   e) Piped text from answer 1e

3-3. What did you consider when identifying the top functions of academic advising?
_______________________________________________________________________

3-4. Which, if any, of these functions are OUTSIDE the scope of academic advising (select all that apply)
   a) Counseling an upset student
   b) Filing paperwork for a Dean
   c) Calling students who have been identified as academically at risk
   d) Building a schedule for a student
   e) Challenging a student’s choice of classes
f) Recommending a student pause their studies when the advisor believes it is in the best interests of the student to do so

Part IV. Additional Questions

This section asks you about the potential additional factors that influence your beliefs about the purposes, outcomes, and functions of academic advising.

4-1. To what extent did the following external actors influence your responses of the functions, purposes, and outcomes of the academic advising program at your institution? (Pick, group, rank)
   a) National Academic Advising Association communications, publications, and resources
   b) Meeting retention, completion, wages, employment and continuing education goals
   c) Following state statutory requirements related to academic advising (I.e. SB 1720)
   d) Institutional mission, vision, and goals
   e) Other professional organizations (I.e. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators; American College Personnel Association)

4-2. What are some barriers toward meeting the ideal functions, purposes, and goals of the academic advising program at your institution? Select all that apply. (Pick, group, rank)
   a) Caseload size
   b) Lack of technology
   c) Lack of financial resources
   d) Lack of advisor training and development
   e) Lack of advisor competency
   f) Advisor turnover

4-3. Which occupation most closely resembles academic advising?
   a) Counseling
   b) Teaching
   c) Social work
   d) Career advising
   e) Coaching

4-4. What should be the minimum level of education required for a primary-role academic advisor?
   a) High School Diploma
   b) Associates Degree
   c) Bachelors Degree
   d) Masters Degree
   e) Doctoral Degree

4-5. To what extent do you agree with this statement: Professional certification should be required to practice academic advising.
a) Strongly Agree
b) Agree
c) Neutral
d) Disagree
e) Strongly Disagree
APPENDIX E

FIGURES

**Figure 1**

*Population Versus Sample Comparison for Performance-Based Funding*

**Figure 2**

*Population Versus Sample Comparison of Urbanicity*
# APPENDIX F

## TABLES

Table 2

*Population/Sample Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
<th>Standardized Mean Difference Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Size</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Non-Traditional Aged Students</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of NACADA Members</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

*Responses Relating to the Purpose of Academic Advising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide guidance with academic program planning</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist students in the clarification of their life goals</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote responsible and appropriate choices and facilitate a successful academic experience</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and encourage students</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help students to approach their education in an organized and meaningful way</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower students to realize their maximum educational potential</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a collaborative relationship between a student and an academic advisor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach students to understand the purpose of the curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance the student's self-awareness and personal fulfillment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster students’ intellectual and personal development toward academic success and lifelong learning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for internships and employment opportunities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Write-in Answer)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Students to understand the meaning of higher education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Verbs to Describe Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Responses Relating to the Outcomes of Academic Advising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased completion of the students’ academic program of study</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student retention</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student interaction rates with campus learning and support resources</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student knowledge of graduation requirements</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student engagement with campus activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet specific learning outcomes set by the advising department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student GPAs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student job placement after graduation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student satisfaction with advising</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student wages after graduation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Single Outcomes Ranking for the Role of Academic Advising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Academic Outcomes (ex. increased GPA)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Behavioral Outcomes (ex. increased student engagement with campus services)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Cognitive Outcomes (ex. increased student knowledge of campus services)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Post-Graduation Outcomes (ex. job placement/wages)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affective Outcomes (ex. demonstrated student ability to reflect on emotional impact of transitioning from high school to college)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Responses Relating to the Functions of Academic Advising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help develop plan of study</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate degree requirements to students</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help explore career interests</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help select a major</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate institutional policies to students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect a student to need-based resources (e.g. food, shelter)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with course registration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help schedule courses</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as a liaison to an academic department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help make career plans</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in new student orientation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on advising practice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help explore world of work information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach (including freshmen seminar courses)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in student recruitment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide mental health counseling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 – Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in professional development activities (e.g. attending a conference)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct action research on advising</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve on campus committees</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

*Duties Outside of Academic Advising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filing paperwork for a dean</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling an upset student</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a schedule for a student</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommending a student pause their studies when the advisor believes it is in the best interests of the student to do so</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging a student’s choice of classes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling students who have been identified as academically at risk</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 9**

*Responses Relating to the External Factors Influencing Administrators’ Views of the Role of the Academic Advisor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count-High</th>
<th>Count-Somewhat</th>
<th>Count-Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional mission, vision, and goals</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting retention/completion goals</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing student gateway course completions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following state statutory requirements related to academic advising (I.e. SB 1720)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing student continuing education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing student post-graduation employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising communications, publications, and resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professional organizations (e.g. NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education; American College Personnel Association)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing student post-graduation wages</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 10

*Responses Relating to the Barriers Influencing Administrators’ Views of the Role of the Academic Advisor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count-High</th>
<th>Count-Somewhat</th>
<th>Count-Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caseload size</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of financial resources</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor turnover</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of advisor training and development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of advisor competency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11

*Career Analogues to Academic Advising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career advisor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

*Minimum Education Required to Practice Academic Advising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13

Should Advisors Be Required to Possess Certification to Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


96


BIographiesKetch

Mark Duslak has worked in education for over a decade. In k-12 education, he worked as a school counselor and, in higher education, he worked as an academic advisor, career advisor, Director of Student Development, Associate Dean of Students, and is currently the Director of Process Improvement and Institutional Research and Compliance. Mark has published in the Journal of School Counseling, the NACADA Clearinghouse, the Journal of Academic Advising and the NACADA Journal. His research interests include qualitative and quantitative methodologies—with a focus on topics relating to administrator-service provider dynamics in education, academic advisor role articulation, and academic advisor identity formation. Mark is currently a student at Florida State University, pursuing a doctorate of education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Most important to his life are his wife and two children.