



**A REPORT ON THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ADVISING SURVEY
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

PUBLISHED: JANUARY 19, 2022

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction	3
The Student Advising Survey	4
Overview	4
Center for Academic and Career Success	5
Faculty Advising Provided by Each Department	9
In Comparison	10
Advising Average Score	12
By Academic School	13
By Major	20
The Honors Program Difference	23
Recommendations	25
Conclusion	28
Appendix	29



Introduction

The number one concern that the Student Government Association hears from our fellow students is feeling unsupported in the undergraduate advising experience at Catholic University. Every undergraduate student deserves a personalized and well-functioning advising system that guides them through registering for their courses, navigating internship applications, and searching for many post-graduation opportunities. Until now, student concerns about advising have largely been passive remarks about personal challenges with the system.

Over the past two months, the Student Government Association has conducted a survey that sought to determine the scope of student concern, as well as pinpoint exact problems students are facing so we can work with the University Administration in making improvements. A statistically significant survey for the undergraduate population of Catholic University is approximately 400 responses, and we are proud to announce that our student advising survey received over 600 responses. Thank you to all the students who participated in this survey — your responses will be the key to creating change in the student advising experience.

This report is designed to detail the findings of the data provided by the survey responses. By dividing the responses according to advisor, Academic School, major, and enrollment in the Honors Program, this analysis presents an in-depth analysis of the student advising experience at Catholic University. The final section of the report details a series of pressing and fitting changes to the student advising experience that the administration should implement to address the concerns outlined in the survey report. The Executive of the Student Government Association is looking forward to continuing to advocate on behalf of students and working with the University Administration to enact necessary improvements to the student advising experience.

The Student Advising Survey

OVERVIEW

After reviewing and cleaning the dataset, the Student Advising Survey received a total of 611 unique student responses. The survey included a total of 15 questions designed to assess the student advising experience through their CACS and Faculty advisor. The first four questions allow us to understand who is answering the survey and whether our sample is reflective of the University community in a holistic manner. The four questions are “What is your academic year?”, “What is

your email?”, “What is your major?”, and “Are you in the Honors Program?”.

The grade breakdown amongst respondents ended up being fairly even, as shown in the pie chart below. The distribution between honors and non-honors students was fairly representative of the University as a whole with 67% of respondents indicating that they were not enrolled in the University Honors Program and 33% stating that they were.

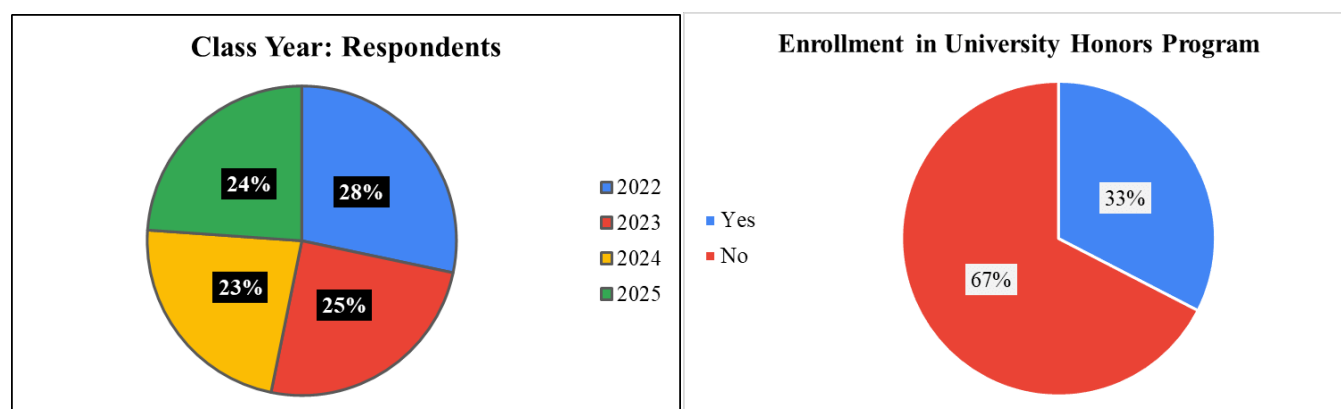


Figure 1: Class Year

Figure 2: Honors Program Enrollment

Similarly, the breakdown by Academic School demonstrates which schools were more prominently represented in the responses. The School of Arts and Sciences has the largest portion of respondents, with almost half of the respondents belonging to it. This breakdown is representative of the school community, given that the School of Arts and Sciences is the largest academic school. Another significant portion of respondents were enrolled in the Busch School of Business at 18% of the total.

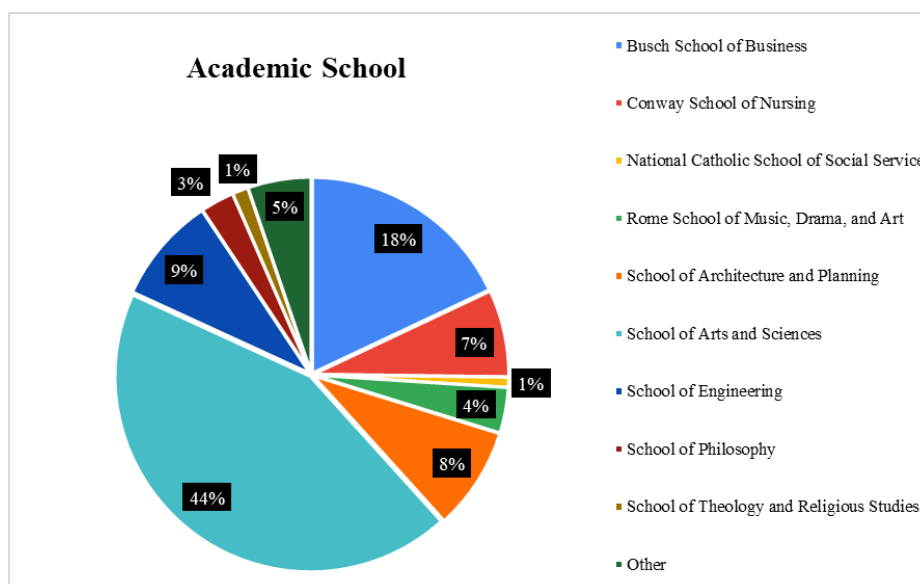


Figure 3: Respondents by Academic School¹

The respondents can also be separated further into specific majors. This separation will allow us to pinpoint the departments with the strongest and weakest advising experience for their students. This breakdown is included in the appendix title Table 1: Respondents by Major. Business Administration had the highest number of respondents with 111 students, including double majors. All of the majors in the Busch School are grouped under this name because every student in the Busch School experiences a standardized and similar advising process. The next five majors with the highest number of responses including double majors are Politics with 93, Engineering with 66, Architecture with 65, Psychology with 51, and Nursing with 44.

CENTER FOR ACADEMIC AND CAREER SUCCESS

This section will focus specifically on the Center for Academic and Career Success (CACS) and students' perception of its ability to support them throughout their time at Catholic University and prepare them for their careers after graduation. The fifth question asks respondents to choose on a scale from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree with this statement: "I have always received clear guidance as to who I should be meeting within CACS." The sixth question has the same structure except it is in regard to who they should be meeting within their department. The responses are summarized in the table below.

¹ For calculating this breakdown, students with a double major in which both of their majors were in the same Academic School were counted as a member of that Academic School and if their majors were in different Academic Schools, then the student was listed in the "other" category.

Level of Guidance	CACS	Faculty
Strongly Agree - Agree	35%	47%
Neutral	18%	18%
Strongly Disagree - Disagree	46%	34%

Table 2: Level of Guidance²

What this table demonstrates is that only 35% of respondents would agree that they have clear guidance on whom to meet within CACS. That means that more than 6 out of every 10 students that filled out the survey could not say that they agree in some way with that statement. Even when removing the neutral responses, almost half (46%) would say that they disagree with the statement and consequently do not have clear guidance on who they should be meeting with. Barriers such as this before students even get to the meeting keep them from accessing these important resources available through the CACS advisors.

However, the blame for this lack of understanding cannot be laid only on CACS, because students can also be guilty of failing to take initiative with the resources they have available to them. However, in any case, these incredibly high percentages do indicate a larger disconnect between CACS and the student body that is very alarming. Another question included in the survey asked “how many CACS advisors have you had throughout your time at Catholic University?” and provided the options of 1, 2, or 3 or more advisors. The responses to this question reveal another contributing factor to the disconnect between students and CACS. As shown in Figure 4 in the Appendix, approximately one-third of students chose each answer. Without further analysis, this distribution seems fairly reasonable. However, when filtering by the grade answering the question, the problem becomes clear. As shown visually in the chart below, the number of CACS advisors that a student has grown substantially every year he or she attends the University. 44.98% of the students answering only 1 advisor are freshmen, which is not representative of how the center is doing over the course of a student’s time at the University. By the time students reach their senior year, 55.22% of them will have had three or more advisors in CACS. The trend illustrated in Figure 5 below is concerning, because of the model that CACS aims to implement at the University.

² This table includes a column for the number of respondents in each major if students pursuing a double major are counted for both majors they are enrolled in and another column in which students who are pursuing a double major are counted in their own separate group entitled “Double Majors”. Both grouping strategies are useful for different analyses performed in the report. For example, the column with double majors grouped separately is used to analyze the faculty advising experience in each major. This is because students could not select which of their majors’ faculty members they were rating their level of support and therefore it cannot be included in the figures of either major.

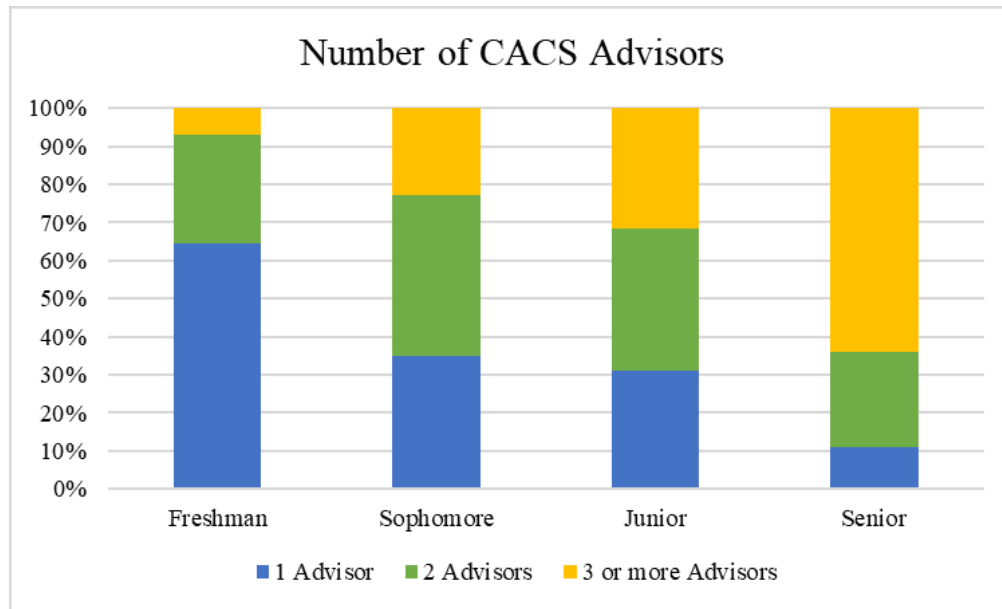


Figure 5: Number of CACS Advisors by Grade

In its current form, the advisor in CACS is supposed to help the student choose classes freshman year and then stay with them throughout their time to be a resource as they find a job senior year for after college. However, the trust and relationship built from that freshman year experience are broken whenever the advisor leaves and is replaced with someone new. CACS has already acknowledged that the high turnover in these positions is a significant challenge and has taken steps to address this problem. They instituted a new organizational structure within the center that creates the opportunity for upward mobility within CACS, which acts as an incentive for its advisors to stay longer. Creative, new strategies such as this one are a step in the right direction to better advise students at the university.

Two of the questions asked focused on the dual purpose of CACS: academic and career advising. The survey asked “On a scale of 0-10, how supported do you feel in academic advising by the Center for Academic and Career Success?” which is designed to measure the academic advising provided by CACS and “On a scale of 0-10, how supported do you feel in internship/career advising by the Center for Academic and Career Success?” which is designed to measure the career advising provided by CACS. Figure 6 below displays the number of respondents who answered each level of support that ranged from 0, which corresponded to no support, to 10, which corresponded to excellent support, for each measure.

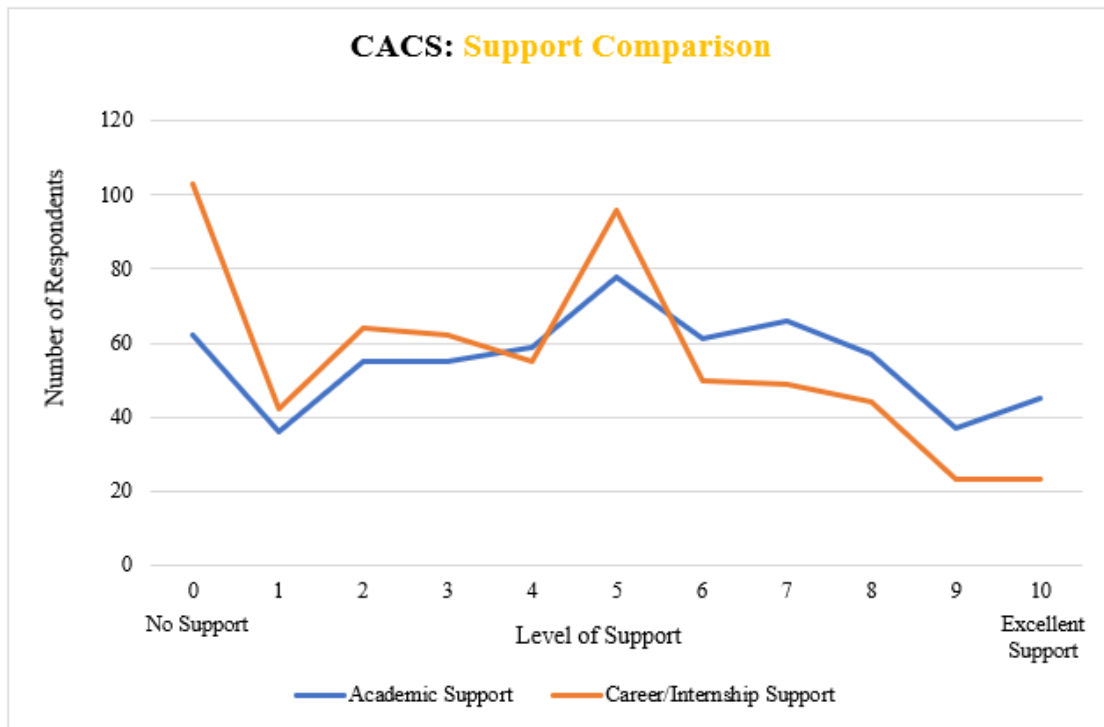


Figure 6: CACS Support Comparison

The trend for the level of support in academic advising shows that almost just as many students have a below-average experience as those that have an above-average one. 267 students answered that they received a level of support between 0-4 and 266 students answered between 6-10. The highest value in this measure is exactly at average, or equaling 5, with 78 choosing this response. The trend shown in the measure for career and internship support is even worse. The number of responses spikes at 103 responses for no support given and peaks again at average support with 93 responses. Almost 70% of respondents answered that they had an average or below

average (0-5) level of support in career and/or internship advising. Given that CACS should serve as a primary source of post-graduation opportunities for many students, especially those majors in the humanities, the overwhelming lack of support felt by students in this area is striking and cause for concern.

The survey also asked students to quantify their experience with scheduling meetings with their CACS advisor. The question said, "On a scale of 0-10, in your experience what has been the ease of scheduling with your CACS advisor?" Figure 7 below shows the distribution of answers from very difficult (0) to very easy (10).

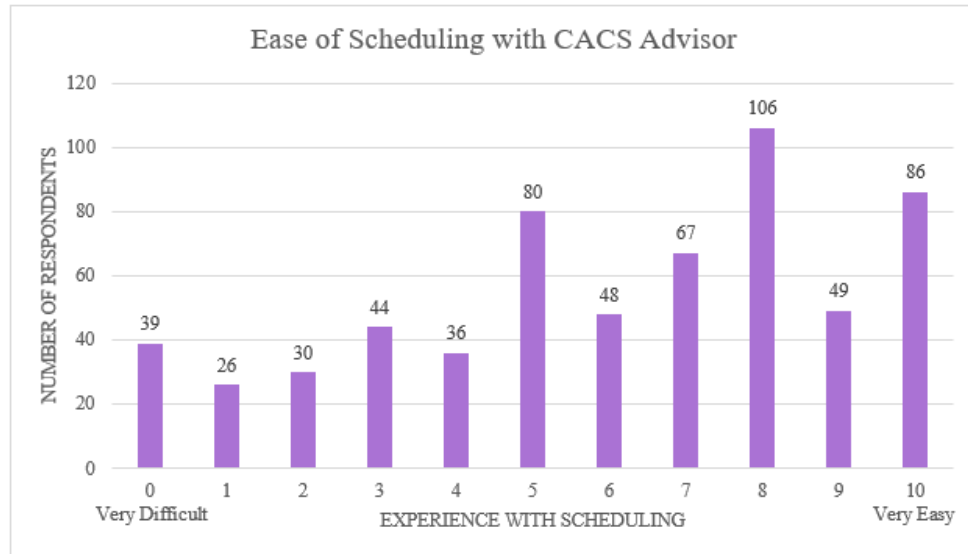


Figure 7: Ease of Scheduling With CACS

Analyzing this data yielded more favorable results for students' ability to schedule advising sessions. 71% of the respondents answered that their experience was between the average value of 5 and very easy at 10. The figure above shows that the trend is skewed to the right with the highest spike at 8, followed by 10 and then 5. However, taking this result in the context of the findings discussed above suggests that the problem is not barriers to scheduling a meeting but instead the quality of what is discussed during the time that the student and the advisor do meet.

FACULTY ADVISING PROVIDED BY EACH DEPARTMENT

The following analysis will focus on the advising for both academics and careers provided to students by their faculty advisors assigned by their department. The survey asked several questions identical to those posed about CACS but in reference to departmental advising instead. The sixth question asked if respondents had clear guidance on who they should be meeting within their department. As shown in Table 2 above, faculty advising performed better on this metric than CACS with 12% more of respondents answering that they agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. This outcome makes sense considering that students have much more daily contact with the faculty in their department through classes and email communications than CACS. Also, faculty advisors tend to have less turnover because they are also professors and could be tenured, which are strong incentives to remain employed at Catholic University.

The survey also asked the same questions in regards to the level of support provided by faculty advisors in academic and career advising. Figure 8 below visually presents these two sets of responses.

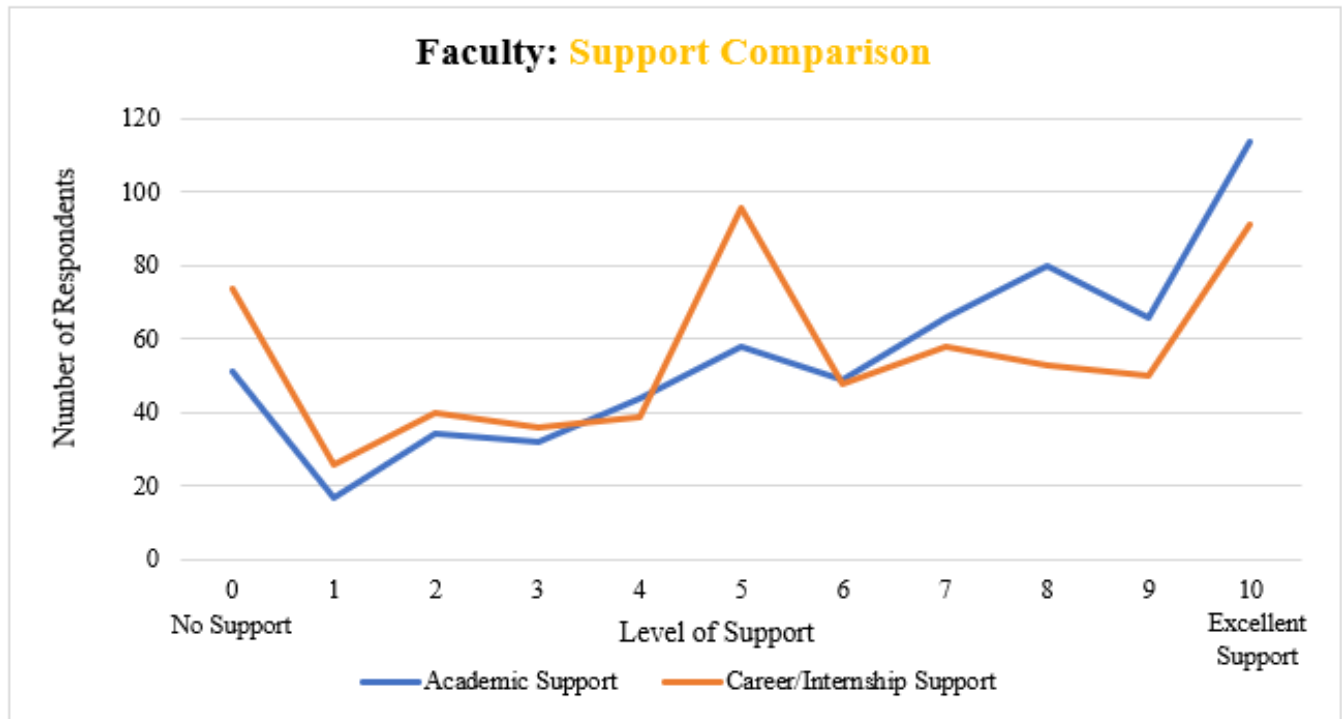


Figure 8: Department Support Comparison

Both of the trends for academic and career advising provided by departments overall exhibit a positive slope. For academic support, the highest spike occurred at excellent support with 114 students answering this option. 70.8% of respondents answered that their academic advising experience with their department ranges from average support to excellent support (5-10). The level of support for career and/or internship advising peaks at average advising with 96 respondents, but excellent support at 10 is a very close second with 91 respondents.

IN COMPARISON

This section compares the data describing students advising experience with CACS and their department. Table 3 below provides a quick overview of the data highlighted in the following portion of the report.

	Level of Academic Support		Level of Career and Internship Support	
	CACS	Faculty	CACS	Faculty
Average	4.92	6.18	4.07	5.45
Standard Deviation	2.99	3.17	2.92	3.27

Table 3: Average and Standard Deviation of CACS and Departmental Support

Students' advising experience is reported as better with their faculty advisor than their CACS advisor in both areas we measured, academic and career advising. The larger gap between the advising providers was seen in academic advising. An important aspect to highlight in this table is that the average for CACS in both areas was less than the average level of support value of 5.

The better performance of departmental advising is further demonstrated in Figures 9 and 10 below that graphically show the difference between the two advising providers in each area.

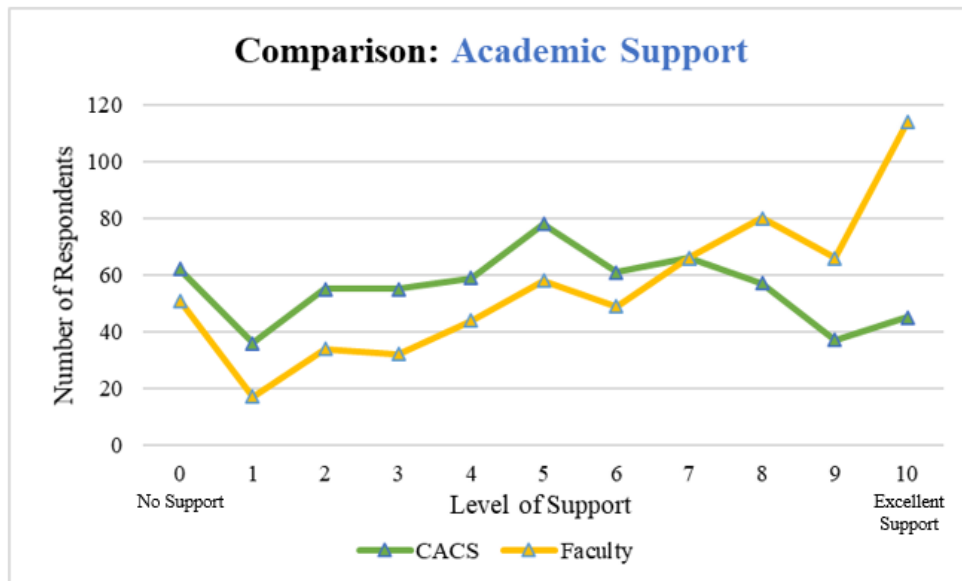


Figure 9: Comparison between CACS and Department in Academic Support

Receiving a high number of respondents in the values from 0 to 4 reflects a poor advising experience, receiving a high number of respondents in the value of 5 reflects an average advising experience, and receiving a higher number of respondents in the values from 6 to 10 reflects a positive advising experience. CACS has higher values in every single one of the levels of support that reflect a poor advising experience. The difference between CACS and faculty in the category of excellent support is 69 respondents. The juxtaposition is even more striking in the comparison of career and internship support.

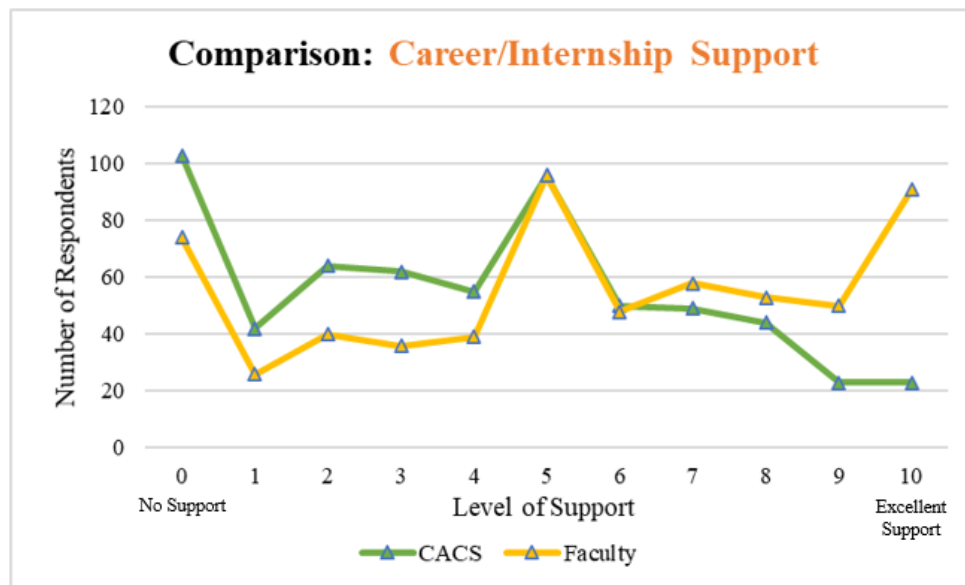


Figure 10: Comparison between CACS and Department in Career/Internship Support

Figure 10 demonstrates that the faculty advisor outperforms the CACS advisor at every level of support related to providing career and internship advice. However, this comparison also clearly illustrates that there is a tremendous amount of respondents answering no support for both of the measures. Considering that one of the primary goals of higher education is preparing its graduates for the job market, the reality that a substantial number of students do not feel supported by either of their advisors is highly alarming.

ADVISING AVERAGE SCORE

To aid with analysis and further highlight the trends present in the data, a new variable called Advising Average Score was created by taking an average of the two values for academic and career advising each respondent answered for each provider. This resulted in the Advising Average Score for CACS and Faculty. Both trends are represented in comparison to one another in Figure 11 below.

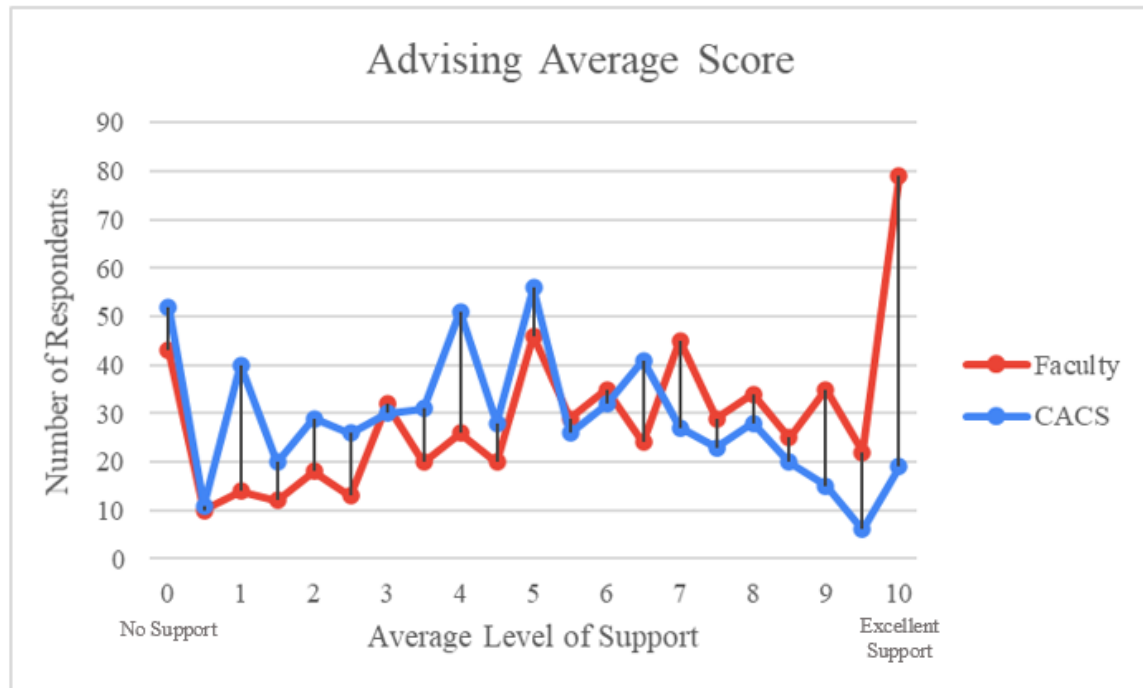


Figure 11: Advising Average Score Comparison

Figure 11 reinforces the disparity between the feeling of support students report from their Faculty advisor with that of their CACS advisor. Again, CACS only performs better at one level of support, 6. At every other level, the faculty advisors' average score is lower at the values below 5 and higher at the values above 5. Another striking element of this graph is the comparison of faculty and CACS advising at the value of 10, signifying excellent support. 79 students reported receiving excellent support from their faculty in academic and career advising, compared with only 19 students that rated CACS in the same way.

BY ACADEMIC SCHOOL

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

As the largest Academic School and the one to which most of the respondents belonged, the School of Arts and Sciences is at the heart of the University and will start this analysis of advising in each Academic School. The challenge of advising in Arts and Sciences revolves around the diversity and amount of majors offered within it. A biology major requires very different academic and career advice than a student majoring in early childhood education, but both of these majors classify within the School of Arts and Sciences. This reality offers another level of administrative difficulty because it makes it almost impossible to streamline advising throughout the School and to audit the efficacy of existing advising practices.

The survey results certainly reflect many of the challenges noted above. Of all the students surveyed that answered that they received no career and/or internship support from their faculty advisor, over 68% of them were in the School of Arts and Sciences. What is interesting though is that the percentage of responses in the ranges of 0-4 and 6-10 are almost the same, around 41%. As shown in the figure below, this intriguing distribution is caused by the number of respondents spiking significantly at 0 and 5 with a similar number of respondents answering support levels between 6-10.

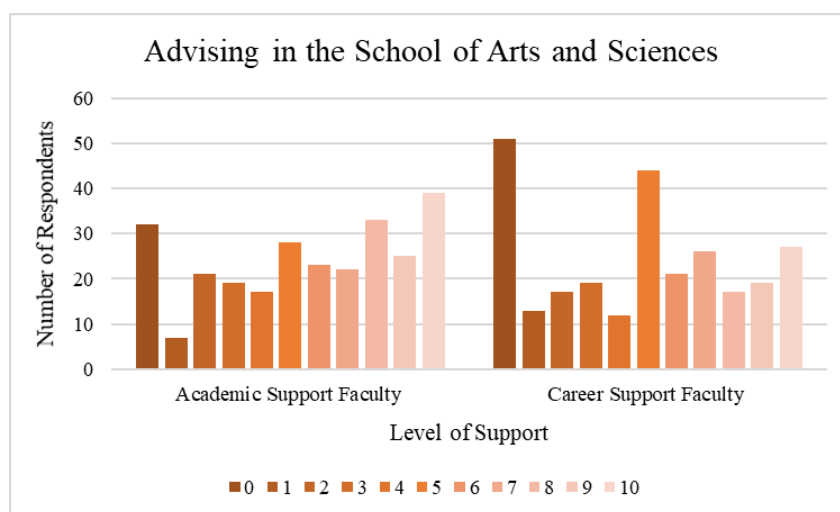


Figure 12: Advising in the School of Arts and Sciences

Based on conversations with students, this trend is most likely based on students either feeling very strongly that their faculty advisor does nothing to help them career-wise, their faculty advisor is not really good or bad, but just average, or that their faculty advisor is stellar and is going to set them up with all of the resources to graduate on the career path of their choice. To synthesize, 40% of students have a positive experience, 40% have a negative one, and 10% have an average one. This is not an acceptable distribution. Concerns in this area only multiply when considering that 65% of students in Arts and Sciences answered that their CACS advisor provided them with no support in career and/or internship advising. These overlapping trends reveal a reality where a large portion of students in this Academic School feel that they do not receive any support pursuing their career from the University at all.

In the context of academic advising, the School of Arts & Sciences performs significantly better. The two highest peaks are at 10 for excellent support and 8. The percentage of responses between 6-10 is 55% which is about 12 percentage points higher than that of career advising. 65% of the responses were between 5-10, which leaves 35% between 0-4. This is an improvement in comparison to the ratings on career advising, but still, more than 1 in every 3 students enrolled in the School of Arts and

Sciences that filled out the survey ranked their experience with academic advising as less than average.

THE BUSCH SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

As the Busch School of Business has updated its curriculum, added new faculty, and renovated its building, the Academic School has also emphasized building its relationships with outside firms through alumni and friends of the University to serve as a pipeline for students to find jobs after graduation. Despite being at the start of a pandemic, 94% of the graduating class of 2020 from the Busch School obtained full-time employment or enrolled in graduate school within 6 months of graduation.³ The infrastructure in place to facilitate this pipeline is grounded in the academic and career advising center located within the School itself. Respondents from the Busch School of Business make up 18% of the total sample but account for 31% of the students who ranked their career advising experience with their faculty advisor as excellent (or 10). The figure below further illustrates these trends in the areas of both academic and career advising.

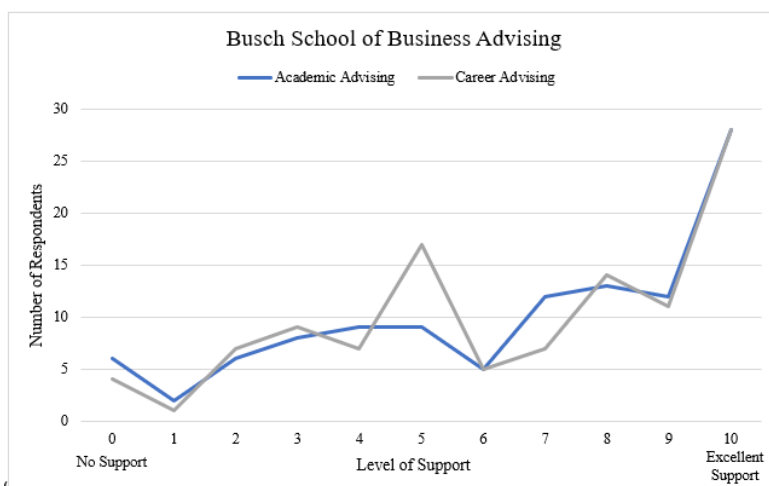


Figure 13: Advising in the Busch School of Business

The organizational system of majors in the School also contributes to making academic advising more straightforward. All students in the Business School fall under two umbrella majors, Business Administration and Accounting, and can take numerous specializations within those two overarching majors. The standardization of courses across most students would simplify the academic piece of advising for their students. Also, the Busch School provides various services to support students in their academic and career pursuits, including pop-up advising, mandatory business classes, career

³ <https://business.catholic.edu/news/2020/12/job-placement-remains-strong-despite-pandemic-struggles.html>

preparation seminars, and regular conversations with working professionals in their field.

Despite these supports, several students cite not understanding the full range of options available for them to pursue throughout their time at the Busch School of Business and after graduation. This can result in students being funneled into a profession that is not where their interests lie. Another pressing concern highlighted by the survey responses is the fluctuating and inconsistent course offerings. Students have reported choosing specializations their freshman or sophomore year that get canceled by the time they reach senior year.

SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

The next two schools brought into focus make up the third and fourth-largest percentage of student responses in the survey. Both of these schools demonstrated strong positive trends in the data from their students. They were grouped under one heading, because many students from these majors engage in the Architecture and Mechanical Engineering Dual Major program, making their programs and advising related to one another. Also, both of these schools focus on teaching their students technical skills in a few well-established majors, which can allow for streamlined advising processes and more often having an advisor in the type of job that a student wants to pursue post-graduation.

Out of the 54 students surveyed from the School of Engineering, 76% rated their experience with academic advising as above average (6-10). As shown in Figure 14 below, the School of Engineering academic advising demonstrates a strong positive trend.

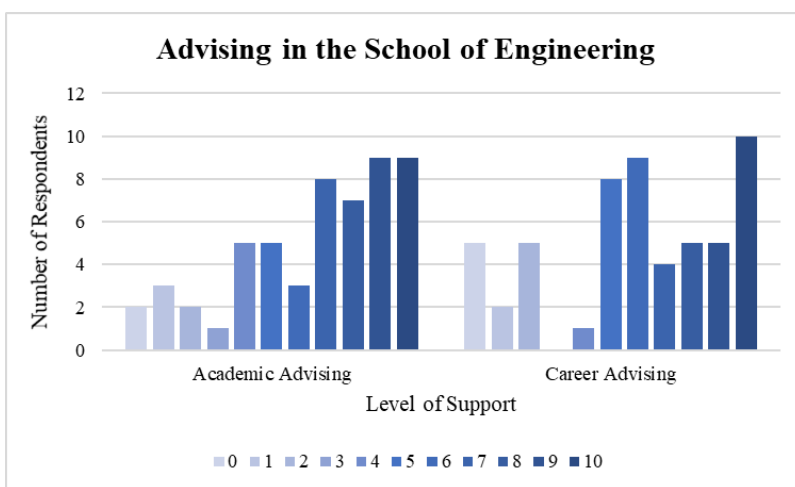


Figure 14: Advising in the School of Engineering

As for career advising, 61% of students experienced an above-average (6-10) level of support. Interestingly, there are very few responses in the 3-4 range for career advising. This indicates there is a group of students that has felt very little support from the Engineering department and therefore answered 0-2 in response to this question. Otherwise, students' experience with career advising has been overall positive and helpful in pursuing their career goals.

Continuing on to the School of Architecture, the level of support given to their students in academic advising is one of the highest in comparison to the other schools represented in the survey. An impressive 83% of respondents rated their advising experience as average or above average (5-10). As shown in Figure 15 below, students clearly feel supported by their faculty members in the School of Architecture to make decisions related to their classes and navigating their major.

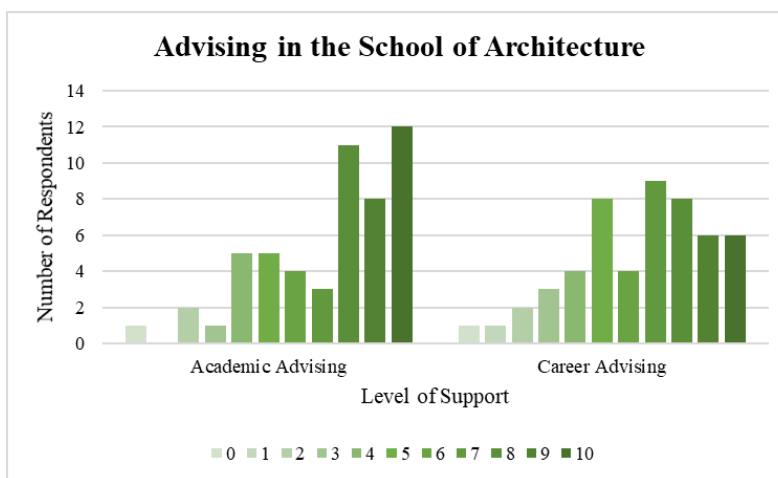


Figure 15: Advising in the School of Architecture and Planning

Responses in career advising are slightly lower but still very high with 79% of students rating their experience between average to above average (5-10). Many students in this school choose to attend Catholic University primarily for the reputation and rigor of the architecture program. With this in mind, this school having a particularly high level of support to its students in both areas makes sense, because without it students would most likely leave Catholic University for an Architecture School of similar caliber.

CONWAY SCHOOL OF NURSING

The Conway School of Nursing is one of the academic schools from which student government representatives have heard the most pressing concerns related to advising. Considering that the Dean, Dean for Undergraduate Studies, Clinical

Coordinator, and Student Liaison have all left the University over the last year, many nursing students have been left unadvised and unsupported. The data amplifies the individual student testimonies present in the survey and heard on campus. Figure 16 below summarizes the responses given by the 44 nursing students in the survey.

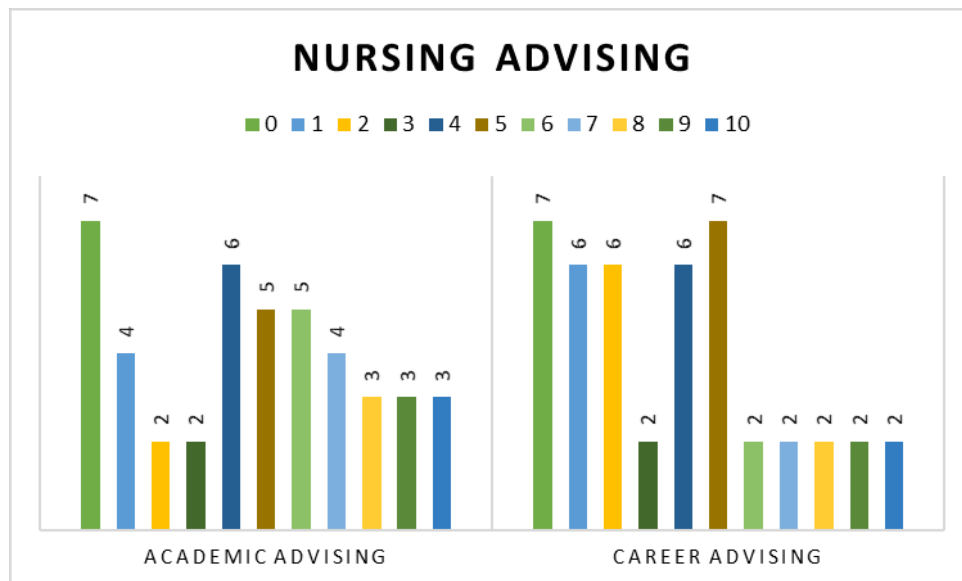


Figure 16: Advising in the Conway School of Nursing

Both of the measures show that the highest number of responses lie at no support. In regards to career advising, the response of 5 or average also had an equivalent number of responses, but the overall trend for this area of advising is much worse than academic. 61% of nursing students answered that they had a below-average experience with career advising from their faculty advisor in the nursing school. Only 3 students from the senior or junior class ranked their experience as above average (6-10). When selecting a type of nursing and hospital to work at after graduation, nurses must consider a series of factors that only an advisor with experience in the nursing field could speak to, such as how do you write a nursing resume, does this hospital have a safe patient ratio, and before I sign a multi-year contract, does this hospital have a reputation of treating and compensating its nurses fairly? The need to have advice on questions such as these explains why CACS is not an appropriate resource for nursing to receive career advising and the number shown in the figure above are even more distressing. Providing resources such as these is now primarily left to student-led groups, such as the Student Nurses Association, which only offer a particular meeting once due to their limited availability and resources. Considering the rigid nature of nurses' schedules, career sessions need to be provided more regularly and by experienced professionals in the field.

As for academic advising, almost half, or 48%, of their students rated their experience as below average. In the nursing school, advising on choosing classes and strategically planning to fit any minors in is mostly accomplished in the first two years of college. The final two years are almost entirely pre-selected and therefore there is little need to consult with an advisor for class selection reasons. 57% of the nursing students that ranked their academic advising experience as below average (0-4) were freshman and sophomores. Almost 30% were in the junior class. This trend shows that academic advising is rated more favorably the less that these advisors are used by students. Similar to the reasons why CACS cannot serve as an adequate resource for nursing students for career advising, CACS cannot be given the responsibility for academic advising either, especially when considering the coordination of clinicals as well. 75% of nursing students responded that their level of support received from CACS was between 0-5. The lack of support felt by nursing majors in every area is a serious problem that needs to be addressed, especially as they enter nursing in one of the most emotionally draining times in recent history.

ACADEMIC SCHOOLS WITH LESS THAN 6% OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE

The Academic Schools included in this section comprised less than 6% of the total sample and therefore in most cases, would not be representative of the school as a whole. If any administrators from these schools would like more information regarding their respondents, the Student Government Association Executive Board would be happy to provide that. Please just reach out to one of us with this request.

With this in mind, there are still a few striking statistics from the data collected that should be noted. For all four Academic Schools with less than 5% of the total sample, none of their students rated their academic support from their faculty member as less than 4. That means that 100% of the responses were either average or above average (5-10). For the Rome School of Music, Drama, and Art, 21 out of 23 students reported their support as above average and 8 students reported that it was excellent (10). For the School of Philosophy, 16 out of 17 students rated their experience as above average (6-10) and 6 ranked it as excellent (10). For academic advising, the percentage of students who rated their experience as average or above average (5-10) is still above 60% for every school. These two trends together demonstrate that enrollment in a smaller school can provide excellent benefits for academic advising because there are fewer students and more personalized attention; however, it may not have as many resources or connections as a larger Academic School would for post-graduation job opportunities.

BY MAJOR POLITICS

This next section includes an analysis of a few of the largest majors or groups of majors that we have heard many concerns about, starting with politics. The figure below graphically shows the responses.

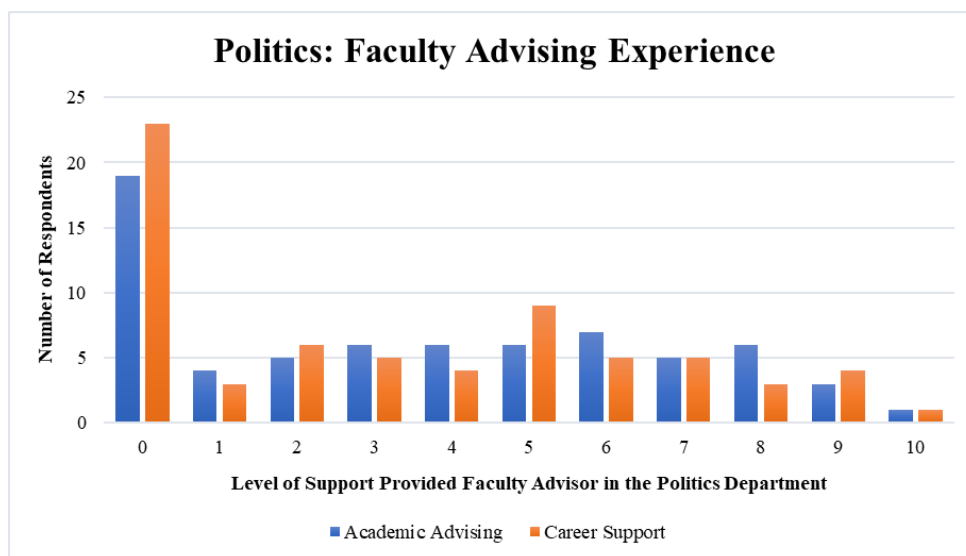


Figure 17: Advising in Politics

Without including double majors, 25 of which are politics majors as well, 30% of students from the School of Arts and Sciences are Politics majors. However, they account for 60% of the responses for no support (0) in academic advising and 40% of the responses for no support (0) in career advising within this Academic School. Looking at the figure above, no support is a clear outlier in both measures, accounting for 28% of the responses in academic advising and 34% in career advising. Considering that Catholic University is located in the political capital of the world, it is unacceptable for students to feel largely unsupported in career and internship advising in the politics department. Most politics students have reported having to use their own independent resources or other avenues to gain access to any of these opportunities. The politics department needs to develop the administrative capacity to use the university's local alumni network to connect its students with internships and jobs. This can be accomplished through a renewed partnership between the Office of Advancement, CACS, and the Politics department.

PSYCHOLOGY

Another one of the larger majors represented in the survey was Psychology, which included students who are studying Psychological Brain Sciences as well. The following

figure demonstrates the relative strengths and weaknesses in advising within the Psychology department.

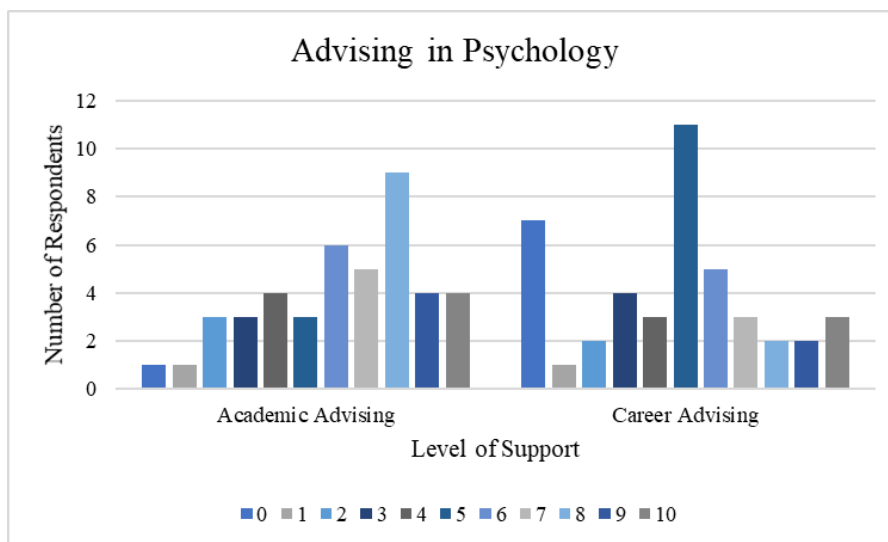


Figure 18: Advising in Psychology

Of the 43 respondents only from this major, more than 72% of them rated their academic advising experience as average or above average. As for career advising, the situation is not as positive. 42% of students answered that they had no support (0) or average support (5), as shown by the two spikes in Figure 18. 65% of the responses ranged from average to below-average support (0-5). Considering how vast the options for jobs after graduation for a psychology degree are, having this type of support throughout one's undergraduate experience is vital for these students to determine down which path they would like to go.

NATURAL SCIENCES

For purposes of this report, all majors within the biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics categories will be classified as natural science majors. Considering the university's efforts to move towards being named a Research 1 University under the Carnegie Classification system, it seemed prudent to include a section that focused on these majors' perceptions of their support throughout their time here. For context, the survey included 13 biology, 12 chemistry, 7 mathematics, and 2 physics students. The responses are summarized in the figure below.

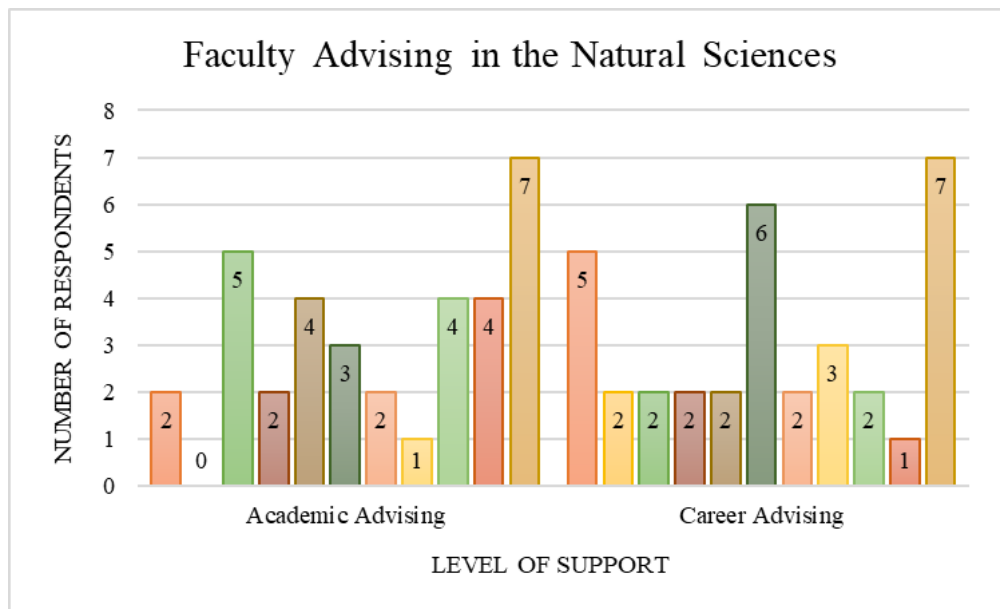


Figure 19: Advising in the Natural Sciences

For academic advising, 53% of the responses are above average (6-10) and 38% are below (0-4). The quality of academic advising experience is dependent on exactly which major the student falls under. Biology students constitute 62% of the below-average responses and chemistry students 31%. The two physics students ranked their experience as a 9 and the responses from mathematics students all fell between the range of 4 to 10. As for career advising, the figure above clearly illustrates how students primarily grouped at three values, 0, 5, and 10. Biology again accounted for the largest percentage of below-average (0-4) responses at 46% and only had 2 of its students describe their level of support as above average (6-10). Biology students also had one of the highest rates of students choosing to leave further comments on the survey. There were repeated concerns about the lack of exposure to other career fields outside of choosing the pre-med track including the private sector and other types of post-undergraduate education, such as Dentistry School.

One senior biology student wrote, “My assigned departmental advisor told me during freshman year to not meet with him again as he ‘did not have any help to offer me’ because my future goals did not match up with his career.” Accounts such as these are highly concerning as the University aims to put its research capabilities in the natural sciences at the forefront of its strategic plans. The level of support given by the Chemistry department is spread fairly evenly throughout the sample with 4 rated it as below average (0-4), 2 at average (5), and 6 above average (6-10). Respondents in the

mathematics major rated their experience slightly lower than academic advising in the range from 3-10 and both of the physics majors cited their level of support as 7.

THE HONORS PROGRAM DIFFERENCE

Within the CACS, there is a distinction between which personnel advises students enrolled in the Honors Program and those not. Two advisors within CACS are dedicated to meeting with and advising honors students exclusively. Students not in the Honors Program are assigned to one of several advisors based on their major. This structure is advantageous for students in the Honors Program because their advisors serve a smaller population of undergraduates. One of the most common complaints the Student Government Association has heard and experienced is that the quality of advising is much higher for students in the Honors program than for those outside of it. This survey asked whether each respondent was in the Honors Program in order to determine whether this trend could be seen on a wider scale. The figure below summarizes the responses in regards to the academic advising split between students inside and outside the Honors Program.

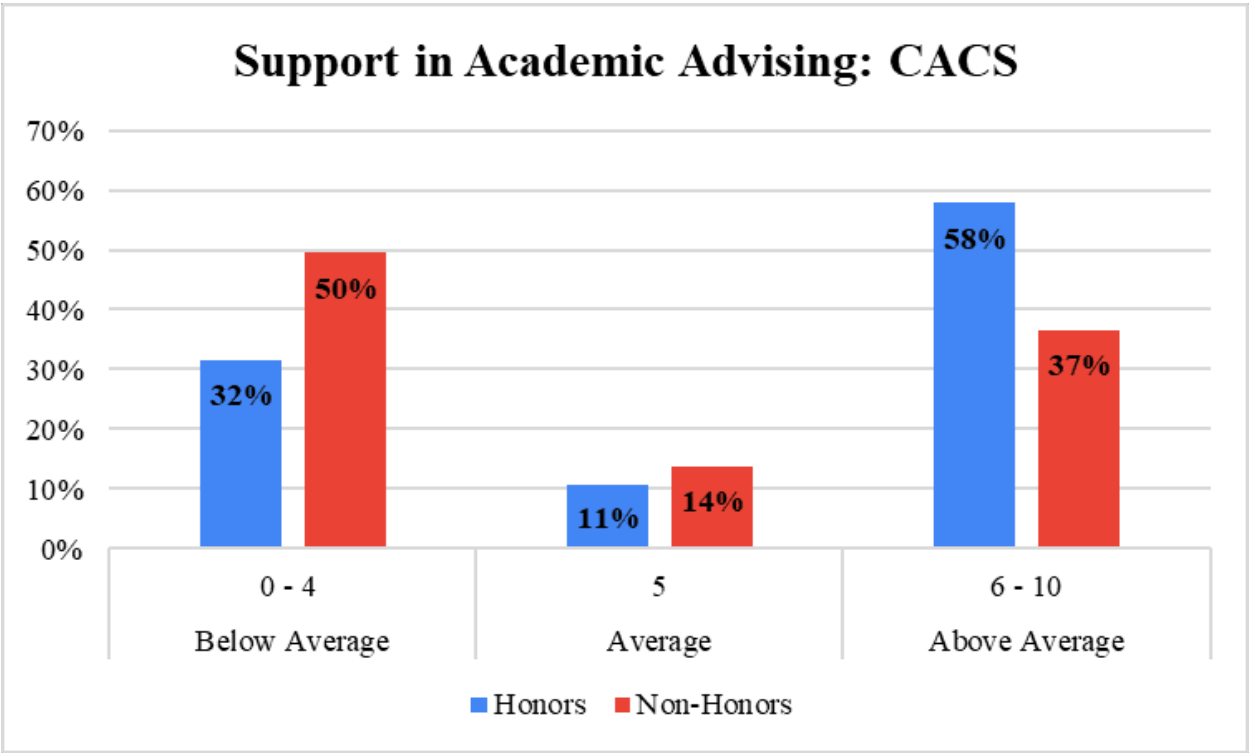


Figure 20: Support in CACS Academic Advising Divided by Honors

This figure demonstrates that the quality of academic advising for honors students is significantly better than that for non-honors students. Based on this survey, non-

honors students are 18% more likely to have a below-average academic advising experience than honor students. Additionally, non-honors students are 21% less likely to have an above-average one. These two comparisons are even more alarming when considering that 67% of students in the survey are non-honors students, which is fairly representative of the campus community as a whole.

The only institutional difference specific to advising between honors and non-honors students is within CACS. However, when comparing advising measures for CACS and faculty members in the figure below, the honors difference expands beyond just academic advising in CACS.

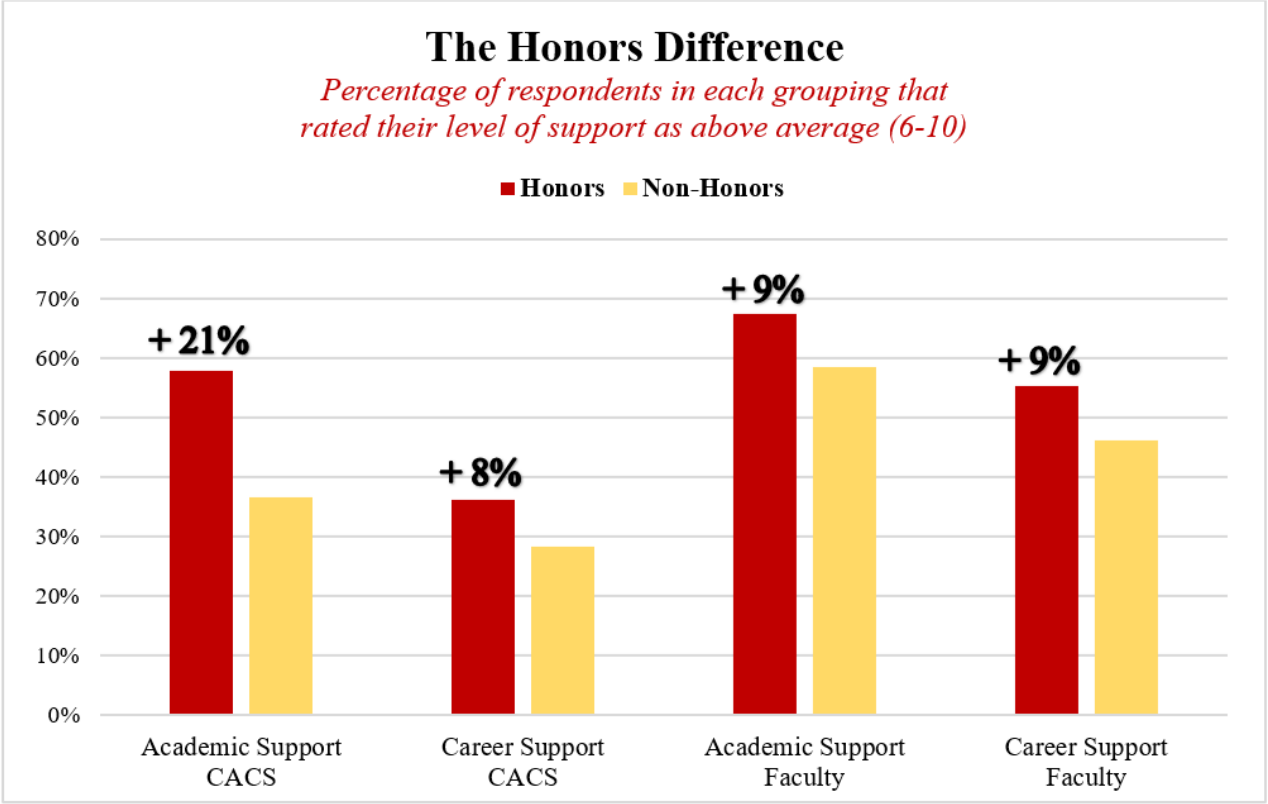


Figure 21: The Honors Difference

Recommendations

Laying the Foundation for Strong First Year Relationships

To facilitate a strong transition into advising for first-year students, CACS advisors could find a time within the first three weeks of courses to present in front of each Learning Community. This presentation could include explaining the differences between their CACS and faculty advisor, how to schedule meetings with these advisors, where to find their advisors' names listed on Cardinal Station, and demonstrating which resources CACS provides. Holding this session several weeks after Orientation would reinforce any information they already received and give CACS the opportunity to share more specific details in an environment where first-year students are not overstimulated with information about their new university.

Redefining the Perception of CACS

Through our conversations with administrators, the Executive often has insights into the effort that CACS advisors put in behind the scenes to support students, whether it is correcting outdated information given by faculty advisors or finding new opportunities to input into Handshake, that mostly goes unnoticed by students. Most of the stories repeated amongst students only focus on the negative aspects of advising, which does not capture the numerous resources that CACS does have to support them. We highly suggest investing in marketing campaigns and events that highlight the many strengths that CACS does have to change the perception that students have of this valuable resource. We also hope that these initiatives will serve as positive reinforcement

for the team at CACS that does work hard to provide these services.

Increasing Opportunities for Pop-Up Advising

A potential avenue could be for CACS to offer pop-up advising sessions in common spaces by adopting a model similar to that used by the Busch School of Business. Students have reported to many Student Government representatives that this resource is very helpful for answering quick questions about their classes during the weeks of course selection.

Addressing The Honors Program Difference

The Honors Program employs several graduate fellows to assist its advisors and administrators in providing support and resources to students in the program. These fellows sent out weekly emails with internship and career opportunities as well as notable educational events happening on campus. If CACS could similarly hire graduate students to complete administrative tasks for its advisors outside of the Honors Program, then these advisors would have the freedom to spend more time with each of their students.

Reinforcing Relationships Between Department Leadership and CACS Advisors

Increasing consistent communication between department leadership and the CACS advisors that are assigned to advise students within them is essential to ensure that advising remains consistently up to date, perhaps monthly. CACS advisors and departmental faculty need to effectively

support one another in helping their students to be successful at the university and after they graduate.

Tracking Sheets

Despite the presence of a course tracking tool on Cardinal Station, few students know of this resource. Those students who know of and use the tracker report that the tool is largely inaccurate in its assessment of which courses students need to take in order to graduate. For majors such as Economics and Psychology, students are given a virtual one-page tracking sheet by their advisors which outlines all of the courses students are required to take each year to graduate. All students at The Catholic University of America should be made aware of the virtual course tracker on Cardinal Station after it has been remedied to reflect accurate curriculum requirements and course offerings. Students across all majors should also be given a virtual tracking sheet by their advisors with required courses for their degree(s) every year.

Regularly Scheduled Website Audits

The University's website needs to be audited more often to ensure that the course offerings listed reflect the actual requirements for that degree. Too often students make decisions about which courses to enroll in based on these listings and later find out that they are incorrect.

Resource Distribution

The report demonstrates the relative strength of faculty members in advising their students in both academic and career pursuits. Providing departments additional

funds would enable them to spend more time and energy on advising. These relationships with students are crucial for making them feel known and supported by their university on a personal level.

Career Development Sessions

All departments should offer career development sessions to their students that are tailored to provide them with the tools to be successful in their chosen major. These sessions can take several forms, which should be at the discretion of the major's faculty members, but every student should have training in basic skills such as how to create a resume, how to prepare for an interview, how to search for internships in their chosen field, and how to network with professionals in a career they are interested in. Providing resources such as these and intentionally building relationships with students will end up benefiting these departments and the University in the long run as these future alumni will be more likely to donate and help incoming students find internships with their employers.

Continued Education

One frequent complaint from students is the lack of robust advising for those students interested in attending law school, medical school, or other similar post-undergraduate institutions. The individuals selected to advise these students often do not possess the advanced degree they are preparing students to pursue. For example, past pre-law advisors have never attended law school and the same is true for advisors of the pre-med program. Furthermore, several students with law school aspirations expressed difficulty finding an individual to read their personal and diversity statements after pre-

law advisors said that doing so would not be in their job description. These disparities in continued education advising must be rectified as students should not have to go through the professional school application process alone or use the internet as their strongest resource in determining the next steps during the application process. The lack of robust advising can cause qualified students to not be accepted into the programs of their choice, which ultimately impacts their long-term future as well as the quality of the alumni network at Catholic University and future donors.

Fellowships

Students' current awareness about fellowships as a post-graduate option is minimal. The previous fellowship coordinator was highly praised by students as being experienced and knowledgeable about fellowships as well as intentional with students in encouraging them to apply for fellowships best suited for their personalities and goals. This program coordinator left Catholic University in the middle of 2021, leaving many students in the dark about the status of their fellowships. The loss of his expertise has left Catholic University students lacking a fellowship advisor who deeply understands the wide variety of fellowship options available as well as the stringent timelines integral to the success of fellowship applicants.

Conclusion

Throughout this entire report, our goal has been to accurately represent the current state of advising experienced by undergraduate students at Catholic University. We recognize the University's clear direction to pour larger investments into CACS, as it creates a designated space for this center in the new dining hall space currently under construction. This reality is also why we feel so strongly about this report and its recommendations being taken seriously to ensure that the next four years of students do not yield the same feelings of being unsupported as the current students do.

One of the student's comments in the survey stood out. She wrote, "As much as we are a small university, no one really cares about us. I have been wrongfully told to take an art class that did not end up counting. My academic advisor has no idea who I am even as I have introduced myself. [My] department needs more people working in it. I barely even get an email back." Our school is too small for people to slip through the cracks. As shown by the survey results, this account is not an isolated one. Hundreds of students on our campus feel this way. In its current form, it appears that our current advising model only serves students who already came into college with the confidence, drive, and external support structures to know what resources they need and how to ask for them. However, Catholic University should not be in the business of expecting leaders, but forming them. Advising is not the only piece of that complex process, but it is a significant one and one that leads each student down the path of determining in which field they will lead.

Thank you for taking the time to review our analysis and suggestions. If you have any questions or concerns, please email the Student Government Association at cua-sga@cua.edu.

Appendix

Tables

Table 1: Major Breakdown

Note: We included two columns counting the number of students in each major, because of the complications added by double majors. The first column reports the number of respondents in each major with double majors being counted in both majors that they are enrolled in. The second column reports the number of respondents in each major with double majors in their independent grouping. This distinction is important for various measures used in the report's content.

Major	Respondents Double Majors Included	Respondents Double Majors Separate
Anthropology	2	2
Architecture	65	53
Art History	1	1
Business Administration	111	109
Biology	17	13
Chemistry	12	12
Criminology	12	9
Drama	5	4
Economics	22	16
Education	25	17
Engineering	66	54
English	13	7
Environmental Studies	2	2
History	21	8
Language Studies	5	1
Mathematics	11	7
Media and Communication Studies	20	14
Music	22	19
Nursing	44	44
Philosophy	25	17
Physics	2	2
Politics	93	68
Psychology	51	43
Social Work	6	5
Sociology	7	4
Theology and Religious Studies	11	8
Exploratory Undecided	5	5
Double Major	N/A	66
No Major Indicated	1	1

Figures

Figure 4: Number of CACS Advisors

