

COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS  
INNOVATION CENTRE

# Proactive Advising Replication Study

Student and Advisor Feedback Report

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## College Student Success Innovation Centre

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## Scope of Work

Together with a \$650,000 investment from the province, Mohawk College has established Canada's first innovation Centre on a college campus that is uniquely focused on community college student success: the College Student Success Innovation Centre (CSSIC – "the Centre"). The Centre is currently seeking proposals from Ontario colleges interested in participating as one of three college partners who will work collaboratively with Centre staff and our Research and Data Analytics Partner to test a student success intervention on their campus.

## Background

The Centre will foster a community of student success innovation across the province through continuous research and the refinement of interventions that Mohawk has previously demonstrated to improve student success and/or retention. The Centre will facilitate replication studies and demonstration projects in different regions of the province and within different colleges to build an evidence base for the validity and generalizability of such student success interventions.

In 2012, Mohawk College committed our institution to student success with the development and publication of our Student Success Plan. Since that time, we have increased graduation rates from 60% to 65%, implemented a student lifecycle advising model, and obtained over \$1.7 million in research funding to lead and/or participate in projects related to predictive modeling, advising interventions, goal setting, student communications, learning outcomes assessment, and data sharing projects to understand graduate employment outcomes. Student success is a pillar in our 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, and we recently created a new Policy Framework for Student Success to further embed student success into the culture at Mohawk. This expertise forms the foundation of the newly established CSSIC, which recently earned national recognition for this innovative work: the CACUSS Innovation Award (2019).

Our **vision** is to lead the province in the design, implementation, assessment, and evaluation of innovative interventions throughout the student lifecycle that improve student success. Our **objective** is to foster a community of student success provincially through:

- **Innovation** through continuous research and the refinement of interventions that improve student outcomes;
- **Capacity building** through an annual Call for Partners for other colleges to replicate studies with the support of up to \$30,000 in matched funding, mentorship, project coordination, and data analytics resources; and
- **Knowledge sharing** across the province through an annual Symposium and continuous publications of results and toolkits.

## Funding

The province's three-year, \$650,000 investment will leverage Mohawk's expertise, current research funding, strong partnerships, and lessons learned to foster new projects that build upon Mohawk's current work.

## Acknowledgments

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This stakeholder feedback for proactive advising was made possible through the work of a team of people at Mohawk, Centennial, Fleming and Humber Colleges. Teams at all colleges participated in either the development of the feedback protocols, or provided feedback as part of the research itself. We sincerely thank everyone for his or her time and contributions.

### **Mohawk College**

- Megan Waltenburg, Research and Special Projects Coordinator (maternity leave)
- Layne Wilson, Research and Special Projects Coordinator (interim)
- Nicole Redmond, Researcher
- Pamela Ingleton, Learning Outcomes Consultant
- Melissa Gallo, Director of Student Success Initiatives
- Helen Sheridan, Corporate Research Analyst, Institutional Research and Data Analytics

### **Centennial College**

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- Paula Greenwood, Manager, Student Advising, Centennial Advising and Pathways Services
- Hakeemah SanniOmosho, Project Manager
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### **Fleming College**

- Greg Jefford, Manager, Student Experience and Athletics
- Dean Shames, Policy and FIPPA Coordinator

### **Humber College**

- Chantal Joy, Associate Dean, Transition & Academic Support, Student Success & Engagement
- Melanie Chai, Associate Director, Advising and Career Services
- Dimple Rai, Manager, Advising Services

### **Education Policy Research Institute (EPRI), University of Ottawa**

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- Michael Dubois, Assistant Director

We also acknowledge the crucial support and assistance of many support staff who were integral in ensuring student feedback was collected following advising sessions, as well as the advisor and student participants in all sessions.

## Executive Summary

This report represents the second of two follow-up reports on the Proactive Advising intervention, originally designed and reported on by Mohawk College and the Education Policy Research Initiative in 2017 (Finnie et al., 2017). Each report is the result of a Ministry funded study for researchers at Mohawk College replicating the proactive advising intervention across three Ontario institutions – Centennial College, Fleming College and Humber College. Our first report measured the overall efficacy of the proactive advising replication, and this second report reviews the qualitative features of proactive advising that may contribute to these effects.

There were two prevalent reflections after the first study. First, the original research design did not allow for an understanding of why proactive group advising improved student retention, while proactive one-to-one advising did not have the same strong effect. The hypothesis was that there was something unique about the peer-to-peer interaction that was critical to students as they prepared for registration and their first day of class. The second reflection after the original study was that the entire research process – the increased communication with advisors, the additional planning and training, the need for consistent session delivery and note-taking, and the on-going focus and attention on advising across campus – had a positive impact on advising practice and team morale. While anecdotal in nature, this observation had practical significance to advising operations that warranted further study.

This report addresses each of these two reflections. The research team at Mohawk co-designed this process to explore some of the features of proactive advising with each college partner. This process included surveys that were sent to students and advisors who participated in the proactive advising sessions, as well as follow-up focus groups with facilitation teams on each campus. The entire process utilized a unique modified Delphi methodology to generate insights and evidence through an open consensus building process.

Overall, nearly 12,000 students were included within the proactive replication study across the three colleges and 1100 of those students participated in an advising session and a total of 86 employees participated in the project overall. This feedback report includes feedback from 653 students who participated in sessions (67.1%) and 27 staff (31.3%). The main findings of this study include:

- Advisors and students are very satisfied with the delivery of proactive advising sessions
- One-to-One sessions were rated higher by advisors and students, a finding contradictory to the original (2016) effectiveness study where group advising had better results
- Approaches to proactive advising need to be college context specific and the input of advisors and students is necessary to establish the best protocol for these sessions

For administrators, this means that proactive advising is an intervention this is incredibly valuable to incoming students. This approach to student support ensures seamless entry into the college system, and immediate connection with college personnel and supports as needed. Future research needs to examine experimentally the differences between 1:1 and group sessions to potentially identify those students who might benefit from each unique approach. Special consideration should also be given to unique student groups (e.g., indigenous, first generation, etc.) who might benefit from custom designed proactive advising interventions. Overall, proactive advising is a support that students and advisors are indicating is useful for successful entry into college.

## 1. Introduction

When moving from research to practice in an organization, buy-in from key stakeholders is critical to success. In higher education, any intervention that directly impacts students and staff must involve a mechanism for feedback in order to ensure contextual fit and sustainability. As will be described below, proactive advising has been demonstrated to be effective at Mohawk College and was replicated across several institutions provincially, yet feedback on the implementation had not yet been collected. This component of the larger proactive advising replication involved a systematic measurement of feedback from students and staff.

## 2. Background

In 2015, Mohawk College demonstrated that a Proactive Advising (PA) intervention for new students prior to the start of their program was effective in decreasing student-leaving rates (Finnie et al., 2017). Moving forward from the pilot study, adopting this intervention as a regular institutional practice was essential for ongoing student success.

With Mohawk's successful pilot intervention, institutional adoption of proactive advising ("Get Set") began in 2017. In spring 2019, Mohawk began leading three other colleges in their replication of this intervention. What became vital in this replication study was adding a method to measure stakeholder satisfaction with the process, as well as to garner insights into the model to workings of, or considerations for improvements and contextual modifications with the model and method to fit. While our original 2015 study allowed us to uncover that PA works for particular student groups at Mohawk College, minimal data exist to explain *why* proactive advising works.

The objective of this study is to outline those features of the Proactive Advising model that both students and facilitators perceive as contributing to high-quality implementation.

## 3. Feedback Study Overview

As part of the 2019/2020 Proactive Advising Across Three Ontario Colleges research study, a process was undertaken to collect feedback from students and staff who participated in the study. This process provided additional data to understand the effects of proactive advising as well as create a method by which feedback could be gathered in a systematic way. This feedback data directly responds to the research question:

**"What are the experiences of students and Advisors with the proactive advising model across the different treatment groups?"**

This two-part feedback process involved student feedback immediately following their proactive advising sessions through an online questionnaire, and advisor feedback following the completion of all proactive advising sessions, using the Delphi method of consensus building. This Delphi method included both a questionnaire and a follow-up focus group, eliciting expert feedback from participants as well as the key personnel who facilitated the PA intervention at each institution. This new data provided insight into the most important elements of the intervention itself. The specific methodology for both sets of feedback is described below along with the results.

#### 4. Literature Review

The Delphi method is a “multi-step process of consensus building” (Menke, Stuck, & Ackerson, 2018, p. 13) by experts that is useful to define areas where there might be, “limited evidence and wide opinion” (Bentley, Kerr, & Powell, 2016, p. 3). The Delphi technique traditionally involves administering a series of questionnaires to a group of experts to define quality indicators of a particular field (e.g., healthcare). In the field of higher education – and student affairs specifically – the Delphi method was used to assess advisor competencies (Burkard et al., 2004; Menke et al., 2018) and included three rounds of questionnaires. The Delphi method was chosen for advisor feedback in the current study as it provides an opportunity to build consensus and feedback around key elements of proactive advising.

The original Delphi method has evolved in the literature to include variations in data collection and now a combination of approaches can be used to collect data and this is termed the *modified Delphi approach*. This modified approach includes the following process revisions: rounds where a questionnaire is followed by a physical meeting (Boulkedid et al., 2011); a first round comprised of a focus group and/or interviews (Bentley et al., 2016); and expert panel meetings run across several rounds instead of a questionnaire (Cleverly, Bartha, Strudwick, Chakraborty, & Srivastava, 2018). Essentially, the methods within the modified Delphi approach need to be contextualized to fit the consensus-building goal as appropriate to the study. For the advisor feedback in this study, the combined methods are described below.

#### 5. Methodology

##### 5.1 Student Feedback.

Mohawk College’s Qualtrics survey software was used to deliver an 11-question student feedback survey asking about their experience with the advising session (Appendix A). This questionnaire, developed by the College Student Success research team, and vetted by all college partners, became part of the intervention package.

##### 5.2 Advisor Feedback.

To identify key features of proactive advising, the modified Delphi method was used to gather feedback from the advisors, staff, and administrators using two main rounds: a Qualtrics questionnaire and an in-person focus group meeting (See Figure 1.) The entire process for data collection and analysis is described in the next section.



**6. Delphi Method Overview**

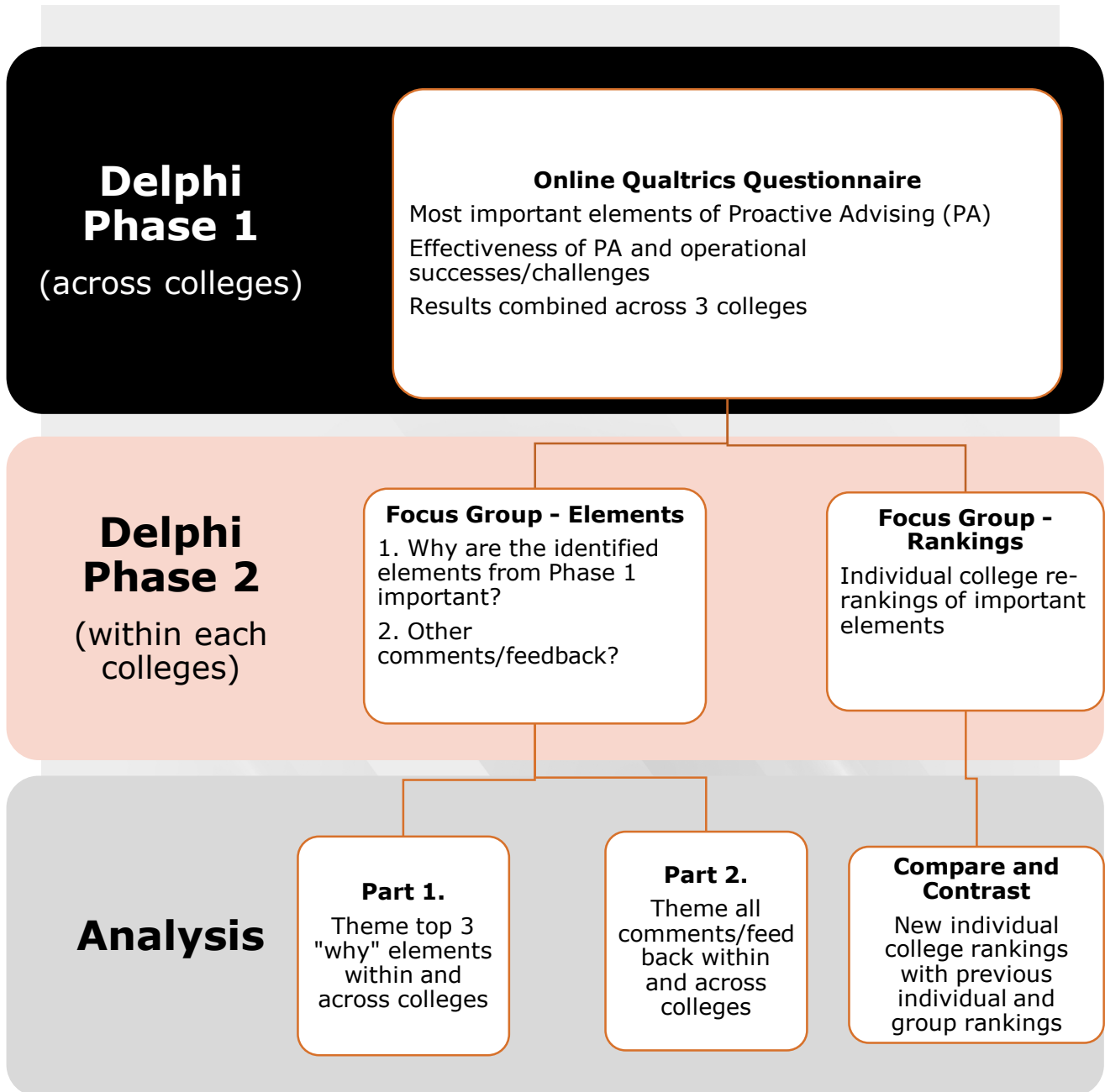


Figure 1. Modified Delphi for Proactive Advising Study

### **6.1 Step One: Co-Development of the Questionnaire**

The Advisor feedback questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed in collaboration with the Mohawk College CSSIC research team and the teams at the three participating colleges. It was designed to respond to the Advisor element in the third research question in the replication study:

*What are the experiences of Advisors with the Proactive Advising model across the different treatment groups?*

Specifically, the questionnaire asks which aspects of the PA intervention were seen as effective and important for both treatment groups – group and one-on-one advising – from the perspective of the Advisors and/or staff directly facilitating the intervention.

### **6.2 Step Two: Questionnaire Delivered Across Three Institutions (Round One)**

An online questionnaire was selected as the tool for the first “round” to align with the traditional Delphi approach, but more specifically to accommodate for the widespread geographical location (Boulkedid et al., 2011) of the participants in this study. This Qualtrics-based questionnaire was accessible using a link provided to the respective colleges for distribution to their teams. The questionnaire was divided into three main areas: i) importance of elements; ii) effectiveness of elements; and iii) general feedback.

The first section explored the importance of elements of the PA intervention, including elements that were important for the Advisor and for the student experience (from the perspective of the advisor). First, the staff were asked to rate the level of importance (i.e., *not at all important to very important*) of the following elements in both one-on-one and group advising: Advisor training, facilities, materials, length of session, scheduling, resources, or other (list). Next, the staff were asked about their perceptions of the following elements for the student experience in both one-on-one and group advising: outreach emails, call campaign, contact with advisor, contact with other students or personalized advising (group advising and one-to-one, respectively), materials, content of the session, connection to college resources, and other (that they list).

In the second section, staff were asked to rate the effectiveness (i.e., *not at all effective to extremely effective*) of the elements of the PA model (i.e., outreach emails, outreach phone calls, group advising, one-on-one advising, and the PA model as a whole). In addition, they were asked about the effectiveness of the operational delivery elements of PA (i.e., booking appointments, scheduling rooms, scheduling times, consent collection, wayfinding, other).

The final section of the questionnaire asked staff to identify their role (i.e., Advisor, student leader, administrator, front desk support, faculty, other), and to provide any additional feedback to the research team or the institution.

### 6.3 Step Three: Consolidation of Results

The Mohawk College research team collated the data from the questionnaires. Each element rating was converted to a score from 0 (*no opinion*) to 5 (*very important*). Across each institution, the top three importance elements were collected across the following areas:

- Facilitator elements in One-to-One advising;
- Facilitator elements in Group advising;
- Student experience elements in One-to-One advising; and
- Student experience elements in Group advising.

These responses were used to generate the initial list of up to 12 advisor-identified important elements within the PA model. The highest scores on importance across all institutions combined comprised the initial element list to take forward to Round Two. Any outliers across institutions were noted. The effectiveness and operational elements of specific college feedback were analyzed independently, and not included in this cross-institutional report.

### 6.4 Step Four: Interactive Focus Group (Round Two)

Upon consolidation of the results from the questionnaire, the CSSIC research team facilitated a two-hour focus group at each participating college with the staff who participated in the delivery of the intervention.

The results of the initial questionnaire were presented to the participants. The consolidated results from the questionnaire (Step Three) were titled on chart paper around the room. The group was then split into dyads to discuss two questions:

- Why is this an important element for PA?; and
- Do you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions about this area?

Participants wrote their answers on post-it notes on the chart paper, and all dyads rotated through questions to discuss a different element in a timed sequence. Following all opportunities to discuss, a CSSIC researcher debriefed with the group and asked any clarifying questions.

Finally, the participants were asked to revisit the initial list of elements in each of the four areas and vote on their top one or two in terms of importance overall (i.e. which *two* elements are the most important in each of the four areas). In decision-making models, this process is colloquially known as a *dotmocracy*, whereby members of a group provide their votes physically, yet anonymously, via the use of dot stickers. These dot votes were used to rank the elements that were important to each institution for considering whether the PA model could, or should, at a broader institutional level.

### 6.5 Step Five: Results Summarized and Shared

The final rankings of importance at each institution were kept as one data set to represent the implementation of PA in different contexts. In order to perceive an overall representation, the top element or two from each of the four areas of importance (as outlined in the list in Step Three) was combined. This master list provides a comprehensive inventory of the most important elements needed to implement the PA model as an intervention in any community college context. In order to provide some rationale as to why these elements are important to the intervention itself, all qualitative descriptors of the value of the elements in the master list were also summarized for sharing across institutions.

## 7. Findings

Overall, students and advisors rated proactive advising as a successful intervention for students to prepare for entry into their first semester at college. Student respondents accounted for 67.1% of the consenting participants and 31.3% of staff responded by providing feedback on the questionnaire (Table 1). The results of the feedback are discussed below.

Table 1. Total participants and feedback received

	Totals	Feedback Received
Total students included (control, one-to-one, group)	11 716	N/A
Students Attending Sessions (one-to-one, group)	1112	N/A
Students Consenting to Research	973	653 (67.1%)
Staff	86	27 (31.3%)

### 7.1 Student Feedback

Immediately following an advising session, student participants completed the surveys at their respective colleges through a weblink, ipad or on a computer provided (see Table 2).

As indicated in the chart below (Table 3), 653 students completed the feedback questionnaire across three colleges. All rating questions required students to rate their agreement to five statements on a 5-point scale (Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1), or Not Applicable (0)). These ratings were then converted to their numerical score and means across One-to-One vs. Group Sessions were calculated. Scores with a mean higher than four indicated a positive response to the session. Students also answered two open-ended questions about the things that went well or not well in their session.

Table 2. Method of survey delivery

Survey Delivery	Centennial	Fleming	Humber
	Ipad administration immediately after advising session	Email link sent post session	Computers available post session to complete survey

**7.11 Satisfaction Ratings by Students.** Overall, the experiences of students with the Proactive Advising Sessions indicates high satisfaction with a mean score of 4.67 (out of 5) across all participants (See Table 1). Students were very satisfied with their session in terms of helping them understand college services and answering at least one of their important questions and they were satisfied with the session providing them with next steps to be ready for school to start. In terms of connectedness, student ratings were somewhat lower at 3.95 overall. In terms of the differences between one-to-one and group sessions, one-to-one sessions were rated higher across all categories. In fact, there was statistically significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) in overall satisfaction, gaining a better understanding of the services available at the college, and feelings of connection with people at the college. The most notable difference was in the student perception of connectedness at the college where the gap between the one-to-one and group sessions was highest (0.31) and the lowest ratings across all questions was given by group session participants (3.89). There was also a larger difference (0.26) question about knowing next steps, with the group session still satisfied, but less satisfied than the one-to-one group.

Table 3. Satisfaction ratings by students

Feedback Questions	Overall			One-to-One Sessions		Group Sessions		t
	n	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Overall, I was satisfied with my advising session.	652	4.67	0.55	4.77	.44	4.53	.66	5.569**
In my advising session, I gained a better understanding of the services available to me at the college.	652	4.63	0.57	4.70	.57	4.53	.62	3.879**
In my advising session, at least one important question was answered for me.	652	4.64	0.66	4.69	.62	4.56	.72	2.557
After the advising session, I feel more connected with people at the college.	652	4.07	.84	4.20	.80	3.89	.86	4.687**
After the advising session, I know what my next steps are to be ready for school to start.	652	4.45	.67	4.56	.63	4.30	.69	4.881

I will book a meeting with my advisor in the fall term.	653	4.16	.92	4.20	.93	4.12	.90	1.095
After the advising session, I feel that the college is interested in my success.	650	4.56	.61	4.62	.58	4.48	.64	2.866

\*\* $P < .01$

**7.12 Qualitative Feedback.** Students responded to two open-ended questions on the survey. The questions “What went well in the session,” and “What would you change about the session” yielded a number of responses.

Most students indicated satisfaction overall, specifically highlighting information that was provided (e.g., “I got a lot of information”, “I understand”, “All my questions were answered”, etc.). Students also spoke highly of the advisors, noting professionalism, helpfulness, friendliness, creating a comfortable environment, etc. Some students specifically mentioned effects that their session had on them (“Eased my anxiety,” “I am more calm starting school now,” “my anxieties...lessened,” etc.)

In terms of changes for the session, an overwhelming number of students indicated no changes, or nothing needed. Themes that arose from changes needed included:

- More program-specific information and connection with professors, coordinator and/or other students from the same program,
- More structure to the session (i.e. providing info, not just student questions), and more information around what and who to expect in session
- More visuals and more/less demonstrations on computer
- Providing campus maps and tours,
- Providing better wayfinding and access at all campuses
- Providing more food

## 7.2 Staff Feedback

All college leads received access to the Qualtrics Questionnaire (Appendix 1) in September of 2019 for distribution to the staff that participated in the project. A link to the Qualtrics questionnaire was sent in October, and all data were collated in early November.

**7.21 Satisfaction Ratings by Staff.** Below, in Table 4. the number of responses by college as well as the the staffing role of the participant is indicated. A total of 27 participants responded to the questionnaire, and overall responses indicated that staff felt the proactive advising model was very effective with one-to-one advising rated as more effective over group advising.

Table 4. Respondents and roles

n 27	Centennial Advisors (10) Other (not specified) (3) Administrators (2)	Fleming Administrators (3) Other (2)	Humber Advisors (5) Front Desk Support (1) Student Leader (1)
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Table 5. Staff Ratings of Effectiveness

Please indicate the level of effectiveness of...	n	M	SD
Group advising	27	3.22	2.1
One-to-One advising	27	4.0	1.33
The proactive advising model as a whole	26	4.46	.706

### 7.3 Important Elements of Proactive Advising

Advisors were asked to rate the importance of the different elements of group and one-to-one proactive advising from both a staff and a student perspective. Respondents rated the importance of each element as Extremely Important, Very Important, Moderately Important, Slightly Important, Not at all Important, No Opinion. Each of these ratings was given a score of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0, respectively, and means for each institution were calculated. Number of respondents per institutions were then balanced and weighted appropriately for an overall ranking across institutions. The next step in the consensus building process involved combining these questionnaire results and presenting these back to the college teams for additional consideration and refinement.

In the focus group sessions, individual college teams responded to the following two questions with respect to the Advising group sessions (Group or One-to-One):

**Why is this element important to you as an Advisor?**

**Why is this element important for the Student Experience?**

Across all colleges, there were slight variations on the elements of importance from the questionnaire to the focus group. However, a number of common themes emerged. These themes were then coded by the research team and were compared and combined with the qualitative questionnaire feedback from students. The following themes emerged:

**7.31 Elements of Proactive Advising Important to Advisors.** Advisors were clear about the elements that were important to them in order to ensure effective sessions are being run with students. Four themes arose from their results: facilities, materials, scheduling, and advisor training.

- i. **Facilities.** The Advisors discussed the importance of facilities for all sessions, identifying both the location and accessibility as an issue. Advisors recognize that need for accessibility for their students but also for themselves. Running sessions throughout the colleges or across campuses is both necessary yet challenging. In addition, having a space that is conducive to running a group session (i.e., not too big or too small) affects the delivery of the session. Some advisors described how the rooms for 1:1 vs. group should be quite different, with 1:1 being more private. The advisors indicated that these facilities should also allow for opportunities to present slides or demonstrate how to locate information on a website, or use the learning management system.

They described how room facilities were essential to the sessions. In the focus group, They described how the proximity to the entrance can be important on large campuses as often this is the first time students are coming to campus. Also – these rooms being properly equipped to allow advisors to demonstrate things on a website, etc. was needed.

In terms of materials, the advisors spoke about the necessity of an agenda to ensure certain topics are covered, although some advisors described how flexibility was important and there was a need to be responsive to student needs in the moment.

*"Students should be able to meet with someone at their home campus for Proactive Advising sessions."*

- ii. Materials.** The Advisors indicated that the materials for group sessions should include some prescriptive information, as well as have some optional areas to change as needed. Some advisors described how there is a balance between providing resources that might be useful for all students, vs. also being able to be flexible enough to provide information that is more specific. One college team identified the importance of branding and providing materials that were of high quality for incoming students.
- iii. Scheduling.** The delivery of proactive advising involves a lot of scheduling considerations, and Advisors identified this as a challenge at times. Each college had their own system of scheduling sessions. With respect to group sessions, some colleges offered too many choices for students to sign up for sessions, which led to smaller groups, or the timing of the group was not appropriate because of other competing campus activities. Other considerations under scheduling included an interest in Advisors having some choice or control about whether they were running the Group or One-to-One sessions and when to deliver those sessions.

*"It would have helped me to actually book my sessions, rather than indicate when I'd be available and only finding out at the last minute whether or not I was doing a session the following day. Also, I never had the option to sign up for either group or one-to-one and was just assigned – it would be nice to be able to pick by preference and/or have the option of doing either to switch it up."*

*"The scheduling of session and logistical support in particular needed improvement. Sessions were scheduled too last minute and project support staff were not properly prepared at the different locations. Some students waited, rooms weren't clearly marked, sessions felt disorganized at times."*

*"Avoid days that will clash with other important trainings happening on campus."*

- iv. Advisor Training.** In discussions around Group and One-to-One Advising, having well-trained and experienced advisors was a repeated theme. As this was a new initiative for many institutions, capacity for these sessions was not necessarily available with the advising team alone. Supplementary staff included student leaders, admin, or faculty, which may have emphasized the unique role that skilled Advisors have at the college. It is not necessarily a service role that anyone can be briefly trained to deliver. Experience and training was a theme that arose in the feedback.

*"Advisors doing the proactive advising should be actual trained advisors, not simply random staff. I felt ineffective not being able to answer student questions. I could not address any*



*of the content questions since I don't know enough about program structure or registration process."*

*"While I agree with the importance of some of these factors, it is not to say that I think as a group advisor, I was given nearly enough information to assist the students. Most of the information I relayed because I happened to know it, not that it was part of the actual(ly) training provided."*

*"The training needs to be more comprehensive for advisors. There is so much more we could do to build upon this as a framework."*

*"Training needs to be totally beefed up, handouts need to be available BEFORE the first appointment (I did a couple of sessions without either agenda or handout...)."*

From the advisors, we did note one difference between group sessions and 1:1. When speaking about group sessions, the advisors highlighted the importance of scheduling. Some colleges described how too many sessions can lead to low attendance as there are too many choices. This also has a direct impact on advisor time and scheduling. In addition, the sessions needed some flexibility in length of time, as there may be student needs that go over the time allotted, and this needed to be built in. Advisors overall indicated a desire to have more involvement in the scheduling of the sessions and to include choice in timing and type of session delivered.

For one-to-one sessions, the advisors indicated the importance of advisor training. There was discussion around the benefit of more experienced advisors but also advisors with experience related to topics not typically encountered. For example, these sessions were being held prior to Day 1 and therefore questions related to registration or timetables might come up and the advisors had to be ready and able to provide those answers, something that comes with more experience.

**7.32 Elements of Proactive Advising Important for the Student Experience.** For the student experience, there was a lot of feedback that overlapped with the group sessions; however, there were differences in the most prioritized areas. Advisors across institutions suggested the most important elements of the student experience in Group Advising were; Contact with the Advisor and other Students, Content of the Session, and Connection to College Resources.

- i. **Contact with the Advisor.** The Advisor is seen as one of the most important elements in the student experience, given their knowledge of college services and ability to support students in navigating the institution. This relationship is one of the first that students will have at the college and it can define their early perceptions of the institution.

*"She answered all questions and made me feel welcome and excited"*

*"The advisor was friendly, personable and helpful"*

- ii. **Contact with other Students.** The Advisors recognized that the peer component of the Group Advising sessions may have made the college more welcoming to new students. The Advisors reported that students would often feed off of one another with questions which could make for a more dynamic session. However, on the contrary, some sessions was some discussion (but no consensus) around whether

students should be grouped according to program, or even accessibility needs, or whether the group should remain diverse.

*"(enjoyed) interacting with other students"*

- iii. **Content of the Session.** The Advisors recognized the unique content needed for proactive advising sessions. Advisors were faced with more questions around registration and timetables than they would normally address, and the skills of the advisor again came up as an essential component to providing a good service.

*"Questions about financial payments were answered"*

*"Eased my anxiety"*

- iv. **Connection to College Resources.** These Group Advising sessions were seen as an opportunity to connect students with college resources, that they otherwise would not have known about.

*"I learned what was going to happen during the school year and all services that are provided to me"*

*"I learned about things such as my student card, osap funds, and how classes are organized in my program"*

#### **7.4 Overall Feedback from Students and Advisors**

The feedback on Proactive Advising clearly demonstrates that the sessions were of great value to both students and Advisors across institutions. Students and Advisors rated the sessions 4.6/5 and 4.4/5 respectively. Students gave extensive positive feedback in their qualitative comments on the questionnaire and Advisors indicated their preference for the approach and wanting it to continue.

*"We should implement these sessions for the future, not just for research."*

*"Advisors have asked for a long time to be able to do something like this at our institution and it never went anywhere – I really hope now that another college has shown this works, we will consider how much more seriously than ever before, customize this approach and then implement and institutionalize it at each campus for each start up."*

*"It should be implemented every year."*

*"I would recommend this program to be installed for each semester intake."*

*"Valuable pro-active outreach service for students that we should determine how to operationalize moving forward and could be part of our student success/student experience strategy in contributing to student(s) transition, retention and success."*

**7.41 Other Considerations.** Feedback also indicated that there were other considerations to make with regards to recruitment, and resources as indicated in the points below.

*"We have to ensure the right incoming students are asked to attend the session – we saw some that were returners, but had somehow been invited...and others who were in*

*upgrading program and needed different content in the advising session (and possibly more time). I don't know how clear the emails were that invited students to come in, but some seem to have thought it was mandatory and were a bit "stand-offish" and obviously didn't care about asking questions or getting information and were just totally unengaged."*

*"This was a very resource-intensive project. A simple call-out for staff volunteers meant that some volunteered without realizing how much this was going to take. Dedicated staff should be conducting the sessions."*

*"The email invitation was slightly misleading as students assumed they were meeting with their Advisor. In reality, this was often not the case."*

## **8. Discussion**

Proactive Advising, as an opportunity to connect students with necessary supports prior to Day 1 is, not surprisingly, a valuable practice to promote student success. This practice involves both the advisors and the institution taking initiative to provide early support services as "many first-year students are unlikely to seek academic and personal assistance of their own volition" (Upcraft & Kramer, 1995). This application of proactive advising across three Ontario Colleges was rated favourably by both students and Advisors across both One-to-One and Group Advising sessions. It is clear that this opportunity for support prior to Day 1 was useful for students and Advisors in this Ontario college context.

What was unique about this approach to proactive advising was the structure, with both One-to-One Sessions (a more typical approach to advising) but also Group Advising sessions. The satisfaction results indicated minor differences across these groups, with all student ratings looking slightly higher in the One-to-One advising (4.69) as compared to the group advising (4.51). For three out of the four colleges, the Advisors rated One-to-One advising sessions received higher ratings in terms of overall effectiveness. This could be due to their own history of experience in One-to-One sessions, or perhaps the ability for advisors to get more feedback on an individual level and have that sense of connection with the students.

As the skills of the Advisors and Advisor training came up repeatedly as an important element in Proactive Advising, it suggests that the abilities of the Advisor can determine success of the relationship or interaction with the student. Given that the sessions were largely agenda-focused with a script, the opportunity for the Advisor to bring all of their skillsets in navigating and supporting student needs may have been more limited, however the breadth of material presented likely introduced students to resources or supports they may not have known they needed.

The proactive nature of the advising sessions is highly preferred across institutions and it seems the case that there is value in both the Group and the One-to-One sessions, although the content, materials, and structure may continue to need more refining using the expertise of the Advisors in each institution. Surprisingly, the unique addition of having peers present in sessions (i.e., group sessions) did not yield any specific feedback at this time, and perhaps warrants some additional investigation as to the benefits and drawbacks. These proactive sessions should only be the start of an ongoing relationship between students, the Advisors and the institution and meetings should continue throughout the term and the student lifecycle (Miller and Murray, 2005; Upcraft and Kramer, 1995).

## 9. Conclusion

The purpose of this feedback study was to examine the experience of students and Advisors with the proactive advising model across the different treatment groups. The feedback overwhelmingly indicates that proactive advising was a positive intervention for students and advisors at all three institutions. The specific operational delivery of PA warrants further consideration to ensure appropriate contextual fit at each institution. As with any new approach to student success, the unique needs to the student group and the educational community at each institution will need to be considered in order to deliver the most effective supports. It is recommended that each institution consider the feedback of the Advisors and students to help guide their delivery moving forward.

## 10. References

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**11. Appendix**

- 11.1 Appendix A – Qualtrics Student Satisfaction Questionnaire
- 11.2 Appendix B – Advisor Questionnaire
- 11.3 Appendix C – Advisor Focus Group Questions

## Student Advising

Please respond to the following questions about your advising session today. These responses are confidential.

Overall, I was satisfied with my advising session.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A

In my advising session, I gained a better understanding of the services available to me at the college.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

N/A

In my advising session, at least one important question was answered for me.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

N/A

After the advising session, I feel more connected with people at the college.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

N/A

After the advising session, I know what my next steps are to be ready for school to start.

Strongly agree



- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A

My advising session format was:

- One-to-one session (I met with the college staff individually)
- Group session (I met with the college staff and several other students)

What went well in the session?

What would you change about the session?

I will book a meeting with my advisor in the fall term.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- N/A

After the advising session, I feel that the college is interested in my success.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- N/A



Scheduling (e.g., times/days available for sessions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resources in the Room (e.g., white board)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other? <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In **ONE-TO-ONE ADVISING**, how **important** were the following elements in your **role as a facilitator** implementing Proactive Advising? (If you did not facilitate one-to-advising, please select 'No Opinion')

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important	No Opinion
Advisor Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facilities (e.g., rooms to hold sessions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Materials (e.g., agenda)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length of Session	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scheduling (e.g., times/days available for sessions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resources in the Room (e.g., white board)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other? <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In **GROUP ADVISING**, how **important** did you perceive the following elements to be for the **student experience**? (If you did not facilitate group advising, please select 'No Opinion')



Other?

Next, please respond about the **effectiveness** of the Proactive Advising intervention.

In your experience, please indicate the **level of effectiveness** of the following elements.

	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective	No Opinion
Outreach Emails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Call Campaign	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group Advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One-to-one Advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Proactive Advising Model as a Whole (Outreach and Advisor meetings)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have any additional comments about the **effectiveness** of Proactive Advising?

Yes

No

What feedback would you like to provide?

In your experience, please indicate the **level of effectiveness** of the operational delivery of the following elements.

	Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all Effective	No Opinion
Booking Process for Students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff Booking Appointments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
College Space (e.g., available rooms; accessibility)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scheduling of Staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consent Collection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wayfinding (e.g., signage; students being directed to sessions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other <input style="width: 150px; height: 30px;" type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you have any feedback for your institution about the **operational delivery** of the Proactive Advising intervention?

Yes

No

What feedback would you like to provide?

Did you have any feedback for the **research team** about the implementation of the Proactive Advising Study.

Yes

No

What feedback would you like to provide?

Do you have any feedback for your **institution** about the implementation of the Proactive Advising Study?

Yes

No

What feedback would you like to provide?

What is your role at the college?

At which college do you work?

Centennial

Fleming

Humber





# Proactive Advising Replication Study Team Feedback Session

College Student Success Innovation Centre (CSSIC)  
Research Team




Fleming College  
November 2019





# Agenda




- Introductions and Purpose
- Overview of the 2019 PA study
- Review initial survey feedback
- Think/Pair/Share Session with team
- Wrap Up and Celebration

# Introductions and Purpose


Mohawk College Research Team  
Fleming Team

- Purpose of Today's Meeting
- Consent Collection








# Proactive Advising Research Findings (Mohawk College, 2016)

Fall 2015 Original Mohawk College Study  
Key Findings

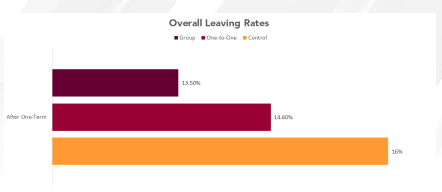


- The offer of proactive group advising improves overall retention over one-term by 2.5 percentage points
- The offer of proactive advising, both one-to-one and group, improves retention for male students over one term by around 4 percentage points
- The offer of proactive group advising increased future advising participation rates in females over one-term.








# Proactive Advising Research Findings (Mohawk College, 2016)

Overall Leaving Rates

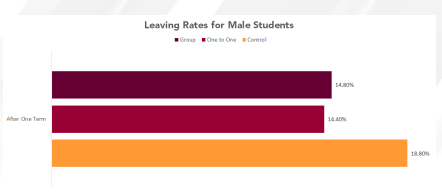


Group	Leaving Rate
Control	16%
One-to-One	14.6%
Group	13.5%








# Proactive Advising Research Findings (Mohawk College, 2016)

Leaving Rates for Male Students



Group	Leaving Rate
Control	18.8%
One-to-One	14.4%
Group	14.8%

## Proactive Advising Research Findings (Mohawk College, 2016)

Group	Participation Rate
Group	17.10%
One-to-One	14.70%
Control	11.40%

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## Proactive Advising Replication Study (2019)

- Call for partners (2018)
- Selection of three colleges: Centennial, Fleming and Humber
- Symposium and initial training (March, 2019)
- Follow up team debrief (May, 2019)
- Monthly calls with research team
- Implementation support via email and phone

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## Research Questions

*How do group and one-to-one academic advising interventions affect student's participation rates in advising and retention rates at four community colleges in Ontario?*

*In what ways do the results of the partner colleges differ from the results of the original Mohawk College study?*

**What are the experiences of students and advisors with the proactive advising model across the different treatment groups?**

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## Advisor Feedback Results

- Feedback gathered via questionnaire Sept/Oct 2019
- Total of 27 staff responded across 3 colleges
- Collated all results

Ranked "important elements" across group and 1:1 advising

*Today – look at these results and expand....*

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## Think/Pair/Share

### Chart paper around the room

5 different areas:

- Group advising: 1) SSN and 2) Student experience
- One-to-One advising: 3) SSN and 4) Student Experience
- Overall elements in Proactive Advising

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## Think/Pair/Share

Partner Pairs  
Move through each element in the feedback  
Respond to the questions on Post It Notes while discussing with your partners -

5 minutes for each element

*Why is this an important element for Proactive Advising?*  
*Do you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions about this area?*

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**(Group Advising)**  
**"Important Elements to a Student Success Navigator"**

Advisor Training

**Facilities (e.g., rooms to hold sessions)**

**Materials (e.g., agenda)**




Length of Session

**Scheduling (e.g., times/days available for sessions)**

Resources in the Room (e.g., white board)

*Why is this an important element for you (as an SSN) for Proactive Advising?*

*Do you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions about this area?*








**(Group Advising)**  
**"Important Elements to a Student Success Navigator"**

Add your post it notes to the flip chart paper around the room

*If your post it note is a duplicate, still put it up near the one you see as similar.*

When all groups have posted, we will discuss...








**"Dot-Mocracy"**

Let's narrow down...

Using the dots provided to you – you need 3 for this activity.

On each element (each flip chart), place a dot beside the **one** "Why" answer you think is **MOST important** for each of the elements listed.

**(Group Advising)**  
**"Important Elements to the Student Experience"**

Outreach emails

Call Campaign

**Contact with Advisor**

Contact with Other Students




Materials (e.g., handouts)

**Content of the Session**

**Connection to College Resources**

*Why is this an important element for students for Proactive Advising?*




*Do you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions about this area?*

**(Group Advising)**  
**"Important Elements to the Student Experience"**

List your key points on the flip chart paper around the room

*If your post it note is a duplicate, still put it up near the one you see as similar.*

**"Dot-Mocracy"**

Let's narrow down...

Using the dots provided to you – you need 3 for this activity.

On each element (each flip chart), place a dot beside the **one** "Why" answer you think is **MOST important**.








**(One-to-One Advising)**  
**“Important Elements to a Student Success Navigator”**

**Advisor Training**  
**Facilities (e.g., rooms to hold sessions)**  
**Materials (e.g., agenda)**  
 Length of Session  
 Scheduling (e.g., times/days available for sessions)  
 Resources in the Room (e.g., white board)

*Why is this an important element to you for Proactive Advising?*




*Do you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions about this area?*

**(One-to-One)**  
**“Important Elements to the Student Success Navigator”**

List your key points on the flip chart paper around the room

*If your post it note is a duplicate, still put it up near the one you see as similar.*







**“Dot-Mocracy”**

Let’s narrow down...

Using the dots provided to you – you need 3 for this activity.

On each element (each flip chart), place a dot beside the **one** “Why” answer you think is **MOST** important.








**(One-to-One Advising)**  
**“Important Elements to the Student Experience”**

Outreach emails  
 Call Campaign  
 Contact with Advisor  
**Personalized Advising**  
 Materials (e.g., handouts)  
**Content of the Session**  
**Connection to College Resources (e.g., tours)**

*Why is this an important element for students for Proactive Advising?*




*Do you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions about this area?*

**(One-to-One)**  
**“Important Elements to the Student Experience”**

List your key points on the flip chart paper around the room

*If your post it note is a duplicate, still put it up near the one you see as similar.*








**“Dot-Mocracy”**

Let’s narrow down...

Using the dots provided to you – you need 3 for this activity.

On each element (each flip chart), place a dot beside the **one** “Why” answer you think is **MOST** important.




## Final Overview "Dot-Mocracy"

Let's revisit all of the elements from Proactive Advising.

The elements you've looked at so far are across the 3 colleges. *What are the most important elements to Fleming College?*



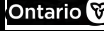
Now you have **THREE** dots you can use **EACH** (12 dots total)

Group Advising: SSN Important Elements	Group Advising: Student Important Elements	1:1 Advising: SSN Important Elements	1:1 Advising: Student Important Elements
Choose 3	Choose 3	Choose 3	Choose 3

## Wrap Up

	Centennial College 4946 <small>(1640, 1641, 1665)</small>	Humber College 5024 <small>(1638, 1682, 1704)</small>	Fleming College 1746 <small>(583, 583, 580)</small>	Totals
<b>Total students included</b> <small>(controls, one-to-one, group)</small>				<b>11 716</b>
<b>Students Attending Sessions</b> <small>(one-to-one, group)</small>	471 <small>(236, 185)</small>	501 <small>(251, 250)</small>	140 <small>(78, 62)</small>	<b>1112</b>
<b>Students Consenting to Research</b>	447 <small>(94.4%)</small>	415 <small>(82.83%)</small>	111 <small>(78.8%)</small>	<b>973</b>
<b>Outreach to Students</b> <small>(emails, calls)</small>	5192 <small>(4946, 246)</small>	7006 <small>(5024, 1982)</small>	5038 <small>(3989, 1049)</small>	<b>17 236</b>
<b>Student Facing Staff</b>	27	22	15	
<b>Other Staff</b>	11	7	4	<b>86</b>

## Wrap Up and Celebration

Thank you for your participation!

