

Midlands Technical College
Academic Advising
Contact: Sandi Oliver
Vice President for Student Development Services

Summary Statement of 1997-99 Assessment Study

The assessment of academic advising at Midlands Technical College (MTC) includes the use of surveys and qualitative assessments to determine student perceptions of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the advisement process. To enhance advisement effectiveness and student progress toward achievement of academic goals, assessment occurs at various points during and after the student's college experience. MTC continues to conduct an annual review as well as a tri-annual program review of the Advisement and Scheduling Center's effectiveness. Resulting trend data on student perceptions are compared to established standards.

The College has set an 85 percent standard for sophomore-level student satisfaction with the College's advising system and established a quality rating standard of 3.4 or higher on a 5.0 scale. To provide a comprehensive picture of academic advising at MTC, student perceptions are assessed after initial advisement in the Student Advisement Center, at graduation, and as alumni three years after graduation. Students also were surveyed during the Spring 1997-98 term to determine their satisfaction with advisor availability. Academic program review surveys provide program-specific advising information, non-returning students give feedback in telephone interviews, faculty/staff provide input through surveys and college committees, and an external review committee comprehensively evaluates the Advisement and Scheduling Center every three years using the Council on the Advancement of Standards (CAS) criteria. Student/advisor ratios are also assessed. When appropriate, comparisons are made with other two-year colleges and to earlier data, for trend analysis.

In 1999 entering, graduating, non-returning students, and alumni satisfaction with advising met or exceeded the 3.4 quality standard and 85 percent satisfaction level. Students rating the availability of advisors (82.2%) expressed satisfaction slightly below the standard of 85%. Similar results (81.9%) were also reflected in the MTC Student Self-Study Survey (Availability of Advisor). Utilizing a 7.0 scale, the priority rating given to advising/counseling by faculty, staff and administrators was (6.56) which exceeded the rating 6.45 rating of two-year colleges nationally and equaled the 6.53 rating for the S.C. Technical College system. These results are from the Institutional Priorities Survey, which was administered in 1999. Advisement satisfaction ratings in academic programs participating in the academic program review process between 1997 and 1999 varied widely. The program review of the Advisement and Scheduling Center yielded an overall rating of 4.9 on a 5.0 scale. Student/advisor ratios have increased steadily over the past six years.

MTC has made significant progress in its use of technology to support academic advising. This includes:

- An advisor list-serve was established in 1998 for academic advisors to share information and effective advisement strategies. This initiative was a component of the 1997-99 Action Plan Objectives that relates to improving the quality of advisor training.

- A pre-requisite checking system has been implemented and is fully operational. A process for an on-going evaluation of the system was implemented to identify and rectify problem areas as they occur. A pre-requisite checking function is included in the Datatel system to which the college will transition in Spring 2001. Also, an automated de-enrollment system was developed and implemented for the Spring 2000 registration period. Letters were generated and mailed to all students not meeting pre-requisites for Spring 2000 courses, based on Fall 1999 grades. The course de-enrollment system and letter generation system is operating successfully. These activities are accomplishments that relate to 1997-99 Objective E, which focused on the implementation of an audit tracking system and prerequisite controls.
- An orientation video was developed and is distributed to all new students. A component of the video focuses on student advisement.
- Degree audit tracking, a component of Objective E of the 1997-99 Action Plan Objectives, continues to be utilized for tracking in a number of academic areas.

To assist in improving advisor training, a comprehensive training program was developed and implemented. All new advisors are now required to participate in advisor training sessions, which are a component of the new employee orientation program. Advisement and Scheduling Center personnel continue to conduct training sessions on a regular basis. The Advisement Action Committee, composed of faculty from all education departments and key staff from Student Development Services and Education, continues to assess advisement needs and recommend improvements in areas such as training, evaluation and processes. Spring 1999 in-service activities focused on developmental academic advising. A leader in the field of developmental advising was the keynote speaker. Concurrent sessions included:

- ✓ Need To Make an Appointment? A Primer for Administrative Assistants
- ✓ Freshman Seminar – COL 105
- ✓ New Developments in Academic Advising
- ✓ Issues in Financial Aid
- ✓ Advising Tools To Help the At-risk Student
- ✓ The Basics of Academic Advising

A session on academic advising was also offered at the Spring 2000 In-Service. The session provided faculty and staff with relevant information related to the implementation of a system for assigning advisors. The advisor training initiatives outlined above are accomplishments relating to the 1997-99 objectives to continue to implement activities to improve the quality of advisement training.

The 2000-2003 action plan contains five objectives: (1) The Office of Assessment, Research and Planning will continue to collect trend data on student satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising on surveys at different points in the college experience. (2) Coordinate the redesign of the Scheduling Center to accommodate the Datatel Colleague System. (3) Assist in the transition of course prerequisites from the SCT system to the Colleague system. (4) Incorporate Colleague System materials into the new advisor training program. (5) Train all part-time temporary advising personnel in the use of the Colleague System.

Description of Assessment of Academic Advising

Developmental advising allows students to meet their educational needs and aspirations by helping them explore their potential, clarify their goals and use the resources of the college to achieve their educational objectives. These objectives may include transfer to a four-year institution, completion of a degree, diploma, certificate, career preparation program or specified courses. Surveys and qualitative assessments such as interviews and focus groups are used to determine if at least 85 percent of students at different points in their college experience are satisfied with the College's advising system and the contribution of academic advising to completion of their academic goals. Faculty and staff views on the effectiveness of academic advising are assessed through surveys, task forces, college committees, and an advisement study group. A tri-annual program review of the Advising Center involves a review committee of faculty, students, staff and an external evaluator familiar with advisement in a peer institution of similar size and mission in the assessment of the academic advising system, policies, procedures and practices. Council on Advancement of Standards (CAS) criteria for academic advisement are used for the evaluation.

Faculty, staff, departmental managers and college committees review survey findings and other assessment information. Trend data is established and summative profiles are constructed. Comparisons are made over time, against internal college standards and to national data for two-year colleges, as appropriate. Recommendations to improve advisement are added to the college's operational objectives as action plans.

Achievement of the 1997-99 Action Plan Objectives

The college has implemented numerous initiatives to improve the quality of advising over the past several years: defining academic advising, developing advisor and student responsibilities, creating student educational profiles and on-line advisement systems, implementing Advising Centers and Scheduling Centers, compiling and disseminating college-wide advisement manuals, initiating a degree audit system, and developing advisor training materials. To assess the effectiveness of these initiatives, several academic advising assessment objectives were developed for 1997-99. The status of those objectives is listed below.

Objective A: Pilot a program designed to increase the retention of students placed on probation. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Education)

Status: A Probation Pilot Project was implemented addressing "first-time" students. Over the course of five terms (961-972), 3,489 students were placed on probation. Slightly over half of those students were P1s (first-time probation students), and received the following intervention treatments: (1) reduced course load (13 hours, maximum in fall and spring: 10 hours, summer), (2) Required to enroll in COL 103, college Skills, or IDS 102, Personal and Career Assessment, as part of the reduced load and (3) Students received special advisement/counseling sessions. At the end of the pilot project, the suspension rate for students had declined by 37%, a direct impact of the probation project.

As a result, intervention treatments 1 and 2 were incorporated into the college's policies and procedures, and appear in the college catalog under the section "Standards for Academic Progress." The third strategy is strongly recommended to students.

Objective B: Continue to improve the quality of advisement training. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Student Development Services and the Vice President for Education)

Status: A comprehensive two-day advisor training workshop for new advisors was planned and implemented. Workshop topics included:

- Developmental Advising
- Registration/advisement process at MTC
- How to use the On-line Advisement Manual
- Course Placement – MTC philosophy
- Advising issues affecting student success
- Computer screens used in advising

An advisor list-serve has been established to enable advisors to share information relevant to effective advisement strategies. The Spring 1999 In-Service focused on developmental academic advising training. A leader in the field of developmental advising was the keynote speaker. Concurrent sessions included:

- Need To Make an Appointment? A Primer for Administrative Assistants
- Freshman Seminar – COL 105
- New Developments in Academic Advising
- Issues in Financial Aid
- Advising Tools To Help the At-risk Student
- The Basics of Academic Advising

Objective C: Make advisement information more accessible to students by developing a web page of advising resources. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Education and the Vice President for Student Development Services)

Status: A comprehensive advisement web page has been developed which provides students and prospective students with considerable information about the college's resources, procedures and requirements.

Objective D: Implement the Touchnet Student Information Access System to provide students with direct access to college services and advisement-related information. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Student Development Services)

Status: A decision was made by the SBTCE to implement a system-wide student information program. Several student information systems were evaluated. The Datatel Colleague system was selected. The Colleague system should be implemented by summer 2001 and will provide students the opportunity to register and pay their fees by phone or over the world wide web. The system will also allow students to access personal information such as their transcripts, conduct degree audits and change their mailing addresses with no assistance from college employees

Objective E: Expand the degree audit tracking and computerized prerequisite controls to all departments to improve the quality of advisement. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Student Development Services and the Vice President for Education)

Status: Degree audit tracking and computerized prerequisite controls were implemented in all departments and are fully operational. A process for an on-going evaluation of the prerequisite checking system was also implemented to identify and rectify problem areas as they occur.

1997-99 Assessment Study

The 1997-99 assessment study of academic advising consisted of analyzing student and faculty/staff survey data over a three-year period and implementing recommendations resulting from the Advisement Center program review. The program review assessed twelve dimensions: mission, program, leadership and management, human resources, financial resources, facilities, equipment and technology, legal issues, access and equity, campus and community, ethics and evaluation. The assessment study examined student satisfaction with advising at the following intervals:

- At college entry in Advising Centers from 1993-98
- While enrolled as continuing students in 1999
- At graduation in 1999
- As alumni in 1997 and 1999
- Through telephone interviews with non-returning students in 1994 and 1995-96.

An institutional priorities survey was administered to faculty, staff, and administrators in 1999 to determine the perceived importance of factors related to student success. The ranking given for academic advising/counseling was compared nationally and to other S.C. Technical Colleges. Input from college committees and task forces, such as the Probation Task Force was also reviewed and included in MTC's "Academic Advising" Component Plan for Institutional Effectiveness.

Evaluation questions consisted of the following:

1. What are the students' perceptions and level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of Midlands Technical College's academic advising process?
2. Does the academic advising process effectively serve students as they progress through their academic experience?
3. How well are we meeting our students' expectations?
4. How important is academic advising/counseling to our students compared to other two-year colleges?

Methodology used included the following: (1) review of survey information on advisement to establish trend data and determine changes over time; (2) analysis of assessment information and comparisons against internal standards and national data, as appropriate; and (3) use of information to make changes in the college's advising practices.

Major Findings of the 1997-99 Assessment Study

The academic advising function at Midlands Technical College provides students with opportunities to plan their educational program and to examine their abilities and interests relevant to their career goals. The advisement function assists students in clarifying their values and educational goals and to better understand themselves as individuals. Students are also provided information regarding the many college resources and services available to assist them in achieving their educational goals. Students are placed in entry-level courses commensurate with their abilities. This approach provides students optimum opportunities to successfully complete their academic goals. Students are encouraged to become familiar with their program's requirements and to make responsible academic choices. Students are urged to establish a close relationship with a faculty advisor in their field of study. After acceptance to the college, first-time college students are initially advised by Advisement Center staff and referred to advisors in their major field for further advisement.

The effectiveness of academic advisement is assessed by collecting data from students, alumni, and faculty/staff. Data collected includes entering student satisfaction with Advisement Center services, graduating student satisfaction with advising, alumni satisfaction with advising, non-returning student satisfaction with advising, student satisfaction with advisor availability, and student satisfaction with departmental advising. An Advisement Action Committee reviews the collected data and makes recommendations for improving the college's advisement program.

In 1997-99 entering student satisfaction with advising exceeded 95 percent (Table A); in the Fall of 1999 credit and continuing education students ranked the quality of academic advising below the national average (Table B); graduate satisfaction ratings exceeded the quality standard and the national norm for two-year colleges on the ACT College Outcomes Survey (Table C); non-returning students expressed satisfaction above the standard (Table E); alumni satisfaction with advisement met the standard (Table D); Advisement Center student/advisor ratios have increased steadily (Table G). Student satisfaction with advisor availability was slightly below the standard (Table F). Student satisfaction with advisement in academic programs varied widely (Table H); and the program review of the Advisement and Scheduling Centers yielded an overall rating of 4.9 on a 5.0 scale, well above the established standard of 4.0 (Table I). The following recommendations resulting from the program review have been addressed:

- The entire college community is informed of advising-related changes as they occur.
- The Advisement Information Sheet has been made available to all advisors.
- Computer hardware has been upgraded for improved access by students.
- On-line registration is in the process of being implemented.

Student ratings of the importance of and satisfaction with academic advising/counseling were comparable to other two-year colleges and slightly below the S.C. Technical College system (Table J). Academic advising/counseling, as an institutional priority, received a higher rating when compared to other two-year colleges and was rated at about the same level when compared to the S.C. Technical College system (Table K). Specific survey results are provided in the attached tables.

After reviewing the data, the Advisement Action Committee sub-group to the South Carolina Technical College retention improvement conference developed a comprehensive Student Retention and Enrollment Management Plan 1999-2004. That plan includes objectives designed to improve MTC's advising process.

2000-2003 Action Plan Objectives

Objective A: The Office of Assessment, Research and Planning will continue to collect trend data on student satisfaction with the effectiveness of advising on surveys at different points in the college experience. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Education)

Objective B: Fully integrate all advisement activities into the implementation plan for the Colleague System. This will be accomplished through the following action strategies:

- Coordinate the redesign of the Scheduling Center to accommodate the Colleague System. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Student Development Services)

- Assist in the transition of course prerequisites from the SCT system to the Colleague System. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Student Development Services)
- Incorporate Colleague System materials into the new advisor training program. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Student Development Services and Vice President for Education)
- Train all part-time temporary advisor personnel in the use of the Colleague System. (Responsibility of the Vice President for Education)

TABLE A							
ENTERING STUDENT SATISFACTION IN ADVISEMENT CENTERS							
Data is percentage responding “satisfactory” or better							
Source: MTC New Student Advisement Survey							
Item	Standard	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Correct Information	.85	.99	.99	.99	.99	.99	.99
Appropriate Referrals	.85	.99	.95	.95	.93	.99	.99
Helping Students Become Familiar with Program Requirements	.85	.99	.96	.97	.92	.99	100
Caring, Positive Atmosphere	.85	.99	.96	.97	.97	.99	100
Effective, Helpful Advisor	.85	.99	.99	.98	.98	100	.99

TABLE B		
FACES OF THE FUTURE SURVEY		
Quality ratings on a 5 point scale		
Source: AACC/ACT Faces of the Future Survey, 1999		
Item	MTC	National Data
Academic advising is of high quality	3.39	3.46

TABLE C					
GRADUATING STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING					
Quality ratings on 1-5 scale					
Source: ACT College Outcomes Survey, 1993-94/1995-96/1998-99					
Item	Standard	1993-94	1995-96	1998-99	National 2-YR
Academic Advising Quality	3.40	3.94	3.98	3.94	3.82

TABLE D			
ALUMNI SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING			
Data is percentage responding `Good' or higher			
Source: MTC Alumni Surveys 1997 and 1999			
Item	Standard	1997	1999
Faculty Advising	.85	.79	.85

TABLE E						
NON-RETURNING STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING						
Non-Returning students from 1991 Entering Cohort, Surveyed March 1995-96						
Data is percentage responding `Neutral', `Agree' or `Strongly Agree'						
Source: 1995 MTC Non-Returning Student Phone Survey						
Item	Standard	1995	1996	1998	1999	2000
Advisor helped select the right courses to meet my educational goals.	.85	.89	.94	.84	.83	.86
Advisor helped coordinate a schedule to meet personal needs and course requirements.	.85	.81	.94	.85	.76	.91

TABLE F

STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ADVISOR AVAILABILITY

Quality ratings on a 0-100% scale

Source: "Student Satisfaction with Advisor Availability" Survey 1997

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Very Satisfied	407	26.9
Satisfied	838	55.3
Dissatisfied	144	9.5
Very Dissatisfied	127	8.4

TABLE G

STUDENT ADVISEMENT AND SCHEDULING CENTERS

USAGE/PRODUCTIVITY RATES

Item	1993	1995	1997	1999	Change (%) 1993-99
Clients Served	12,440	13,200	20,000	22,000	76.8%
Staff	8	8	8	8	0
Client/Staff Ratio	1,555:1	1,650:1	2,500:1	2,750:1	76.8%

TABLE H**STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING ON DEPARTMENTAL SURVEYS
FOR ACADMIC PROGRAMS UNDERGOING PROGRAM REVIEW
DURING 1996-1997**

Data is percentage responding “good” or “excellent”; quality ratings are on a 4.0 scale
“NA” =Not Available

Date	Program	Standard	No. of Responses	Excellent or Good Satisfaction Rating
Sept. 97	Commercial Graphics	.85	43	.84
Apr. 97	Machine Tool Technology	.85	11	.64
Feb. 97	Court Reporting	.85	16	100.0
Mar. 97	Legal Assistant/Paralegal	.85	76	.75
Nov. 95	Medical Assisting	.85	18	.89
Jun. 97	Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning Technology	.85	20	.85
May 97	Surgical Technology	.85	14	.64

TABLE H**STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING ON DEPARTMENTAL SURVEYS
FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS UNDERGOING PROGRAM REVIEW
DURING 1997-1998****Data is percentage responding “good” or “excellent”; quality ratings are on a 4.0 scale
“NA” = Not Available**

Date	Program	Standard	No. of Responses	Excellent or Good Satisfaction Rating
Aug. 98	Computer Technology	.85	14	.71
Jul. 98	Telecommunications Systems Management	.85	26	.42
Aug. 98	Office Systems Technology	.85	23	.78
Jul. 98	Accounting	.85	22	.95
Jun. 98	Associate Degree Nursing	.85	38	.89
Jul. 98	Management	.85	31	.74
Jul. 98	Marketing	.85	21	.90
Dec. 98	Pharmacy Technology	.85	18	.72
Apr. 98	Human Services	.85	21	.71

TABLE H**STUDENTS SATISFACTION WITH ADVISING ON DEPARTMENTAL SURVEYS
FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS UNDERGOING PROGRAM REVIEW
DURING 1998-1999**

Data is percentage responding "good" or "excellent"; quality ratings are on a 4.0 scale
"NA" = Not Available

Date	Program	Standard	No. of Responses	Excellent or Good Satisfaction Rating
Jun. 99	Practical Nursing	.85	23	.65
Jul. 99	Medical Laboratory Technology	.85	15	.73
May 99	Nuclear Medicine Technology	.85	4	100.0
Feb. 99	Physical Therapist Assistant	.85	31	100.0
Feb. 99	Dental Assisting	.85	11	.82
Feb. 99	Dental Hygiene	.85	31	100.0
Apr.99	Radiologic Technology	.85	22	.73

TABLE I**ADVISEMENT/SCHEDULING CENTER PROGRAM REVIEW****Ratings on a 5-point quality scale, Conducted April 1995 and June 1999**

Review Component	Standard	1995 Rating	1999 Rating
Mission	4.0	5.0	5.0
Program	4.0	5.0	5.0
Leadership Management	4.0	4.8	5.0
Human Resources	4.0	4.2	4.6
Financial Resources	4.0	3.6	5.0
Facilities	4.0	5.0	5.0
Equipment and Technology	4.0	5.0	4.5
Legal Issues	4.0	5.0	5.0
Access and Equity	4.0	5.0	5.0
Campus and Community	4.0	5.0	5.0
Ethics	4.0	5.0	5.0
Evaluation	4.0	5.0	5.0
Overall Rating	4.0	4.8	4.9
1999 Review Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High satisfaction on user surveys• High quality of management and staff• High staff satisfaction• Low staff turnover• Budgets wisely to maintain adequate funding• Excellent advisor training available• Clearly defined policies of compliance• Working beyond call of duty• Adherence to national, state and professional guidelines• Excellent commitment to students and mission		

1999 Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College wide e-mail announcing any changes or training that relates to student advisement • Include “Asset Course Placement Info sheet” in College wide Advisement Manuals and student handbook or catalog • Include employee input in compensation section • Include updated facility survey for ADA compliance • Upgrade hardware and software for better student interface • Implement on-line registration • Technology - lack of hardware/software allowing student access to information
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<p align="center">Table J Student Satisfaction Inventory Ratings on a 7-point quality scale Source: Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, 1999</p>			
Questions/Categories	MTC	Other Two Yr. Colleges	S.C. Technical College System
Importance of Academic Advising/Counseling	6.15	6.11	6.22
Agreement of Importance of Academic Advising/Counseling	5.12	5.07	5.30

<p align="center">Table K Institutional Priorities Survey Ratings on a 5-point quality scale Source: Noel-Levitz Institutional Priorities Survey, 1999 (Faculty, Staff and Administrators)</p>			
Questions/Categories	MTC	Other Two Yr. Colleges	S.C. Technical College System
Importance of Academic Advising/Counseling	6.56	6.45	6.53
Agreement of Importance of Academic Advising/Counseling	5.56	5.34	5.51

Table L

**MTC Student Self-Study Survey
(Availability of Advisor)**

Question	Response								Total	
	Very Dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Satisfied		Very Satisfied			
	N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.	N	Pct.
Availability of advisor	193	4.4	590	13.6	2603	59.9	956	22.0	4342	100