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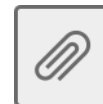
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Doctoral Program Office
 College of Education and Health Professions
 3121 Frank Brown Hall
 706-565-1442
 edd@columbusstate.edu

Student Name: Tracy Crowder Mitchell **Banner ID:** 909435646 **EdD Track:** EDHE

Committee Chair: Jennifer Lovelace

Date: 10/28/2022 **Time:** 9:00 am **Location:** ZOOM

Dissertation Title: A Qualitative Investigation into the Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Best Advisement Practices

This dissertation has been read and approved by the undersigned. It is recommended for acceptance to the University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Leadership.

Approved by the Following Committee Members:

Committee Member: Jennifer Lovelace, Chair and Methodologist

DocuSigned by:

 Signature/Date 11/22/2022 | 1:58

Committee Member: Melissa Young, Committee Member

DocuSigned by:

 Signature/Date 11/22/2022 | 1:58

Committee Member: Gail Johnson, Committee Member

DocuSigned by:

 Signature/Date 11/22/2022 | 2:11 PM EST

Committee Member:

DocuSigned by:
 Signature/Date

Recommended by:

DocuSigned by:

 Jennifer M. Lovelace, Director of the Doctoral Program

11/22/2022 | 2:11 PM EST

Date

DocuSigned by:

 Deniz Peker, Chair, Department of Teacher Education, Leadership, and Counseling

11/25/2022 | 1:58 PM EST

Date

DocuSigned by:

 Margie Yates, Interim Dean, College of Education and Health Professions and Dean of Research and Graduate Studies

11/28/2022 | 1:29 PM EST

Date

Updated 8/22/2022

**A Qualitative Investigation into the Academic Advisors' Perceptions of
Best Advisement Practices**

by

Tracy Crowder Mitchell

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
The Degree of Doctor of Education
In Curriculum and Leadership
(HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION)

Keywords: Academic Advising, Advisors' Perceptions, Student Success, Best Practices

Columbus State University
Columbus, GA

Jennifer Lovelace, PhD, Chair and Methodologist, Teacher Education, Leadership, and Counseling
Gail Johnson, EdD, Committee Member, Associate Dean, and Assistant Professor, Mercer University
College of Professional Advancement
Melissa Young, EdD, Committee Member, Director of Advising, CSU ADVISE

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all my prayer warriors. First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I adore you, and you are the source of my strength and the hill from which my help flows. Philippians 4:13- "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.”

Thank you to my parents, Stephen Lawrence Crowder and Alice Lorraine Crowder, for all you have done for me. I miss you more than words can express. I wish you were here to see me do this. I always wanted to make you parents proud, and for my family, I wanted to end generational curses.

This dissertation is dedicated to the voices of academic advisors who are frequently suppressed because of a lack of support.

As a tribute to the sacrifices made by my husband, daughters, and son, I have dedicated this dissertation to them.

Acknowledgments

My Mighty Amigas-My committee-Dr. Lovelace, my committee chair and methodologist, I want to thank you for all your help and guidance. Furthermore, I want to thank you for accepting all the appointments I booked for the past year. Throughout this dissertation process, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Young were always ready to read and provide me with immediate feedback. I greatly appreciate your help! Thank you all so much for everything you have done for me.

My husband, Jerome, has been nothing but loving and supportive throughout this whole thing, and I appreciate that so much. The fact that you were ready to share me with this process is just one more reason why I know you are my soul mate and that I love you so deeply. You're the greatest! Thank you to my daughter Keiuna and son Le'Curtis for listening to me and giving me the support I needed to persevere through challenging times. Also, for sharing me with this process.

To all my prayer warriors near and far, thank you for the time you spent with God on my behalf (especially my Godparents, Wade and Joyce Winters and my adopted parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hayes).

Julia Burnett is appreciated for her support and encouragement. You convinced me to apply for the program and gave me the confidence to know that I could be accepted and succeed. Here I am! Julia Burnett is appreciated for her support and encouragement. I know I worried you to death for a year before I even applied. You convinced me to apply for the program and gave me the confidence I could be successful in the program. Here I am!

I want to express my gratitude to the advisors who took part in the study and provided their perspectives to advance the profession of academic advising. You rock!

Last but not least, to my Bookie, my best friend, and my sister, Dr. Jennifer Hayes, for consenting to join me on this doctoral journey. Without my best friend and accountability partner, I could not have accomplished this. We made it, Bookie.

TRACY MITCHELL

Carrollton, GA 30116 · 404-831-3421

tracymitchell531@gmail.com

Microsoft Office, Banner, Navigate (Student Success Management System), and Degree Works knowledge. Excellent communicator who works well in a team. Recognize the importance of and concern for students' progress; Policy and process knowledge of the Board of Regents-University System of Georgia.

EXPERIENCE

NOVEMBER 2021-PRESENT

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, J. MACK ROBINSON COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Manage and oversee the graduate student petition/appeal process.

Review and make recommendations for re-entry applications, post-graduate applications, time-limit extension requests, and academic standing petitions

Advise current and prospective students regarding their academic programs and goals about the requirements of GSU and the college.

Assess the needs of each student, evaluate transfer credit, and communicate effectively with prospective and current students, faculty, staff, and various constituents in the GSU community and beyond.

Evaluates and maintain student records for degree requirements using an academic evaluation system.

Monitors student registration activities and academic progress.

Monitors and tracks retention, progression, and graduation of all students within the assigned population

Oversee, update and manage the curriculum and catalog changes in the Global and Modeling clusters in the Robinson portfolio.

Maintain and update all records for students in each.

Working with faculty Directors to ensure all data is accurate and up to date.

Conduct orientation sessions for new, transition, and transfer students

Supervise and train new advisors on the graduate team. Serves as supervisor for advisors and support staff in the absence of the Director.

Serves as a resource person on the policies and procedures in the Robinson College of Business.

Primary contact for reports related to enrollment, graduation, and retention of graduate students for the advising team.

DECEMBER 2018-OCTOBER 2021

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, J. MACK ROBINSON COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Helped students recognize and achieve their educational goals.

Assisted the Director in developing programs that reflected the skills necessary for academic success and served as a faculty liaison for students with academic difficulties.
Coordinated and scheduled academic advisement related activities.
Maintained an up-to-date Advising Portfolio with a summary record of performance-to-date (grade reports, transcript, requirements completed, etc.).
Provided educational guidance and assistance for students by planning schedules, recommending courses, and determining appropriate education solutions for different types of students.
Provided support and coordination for college-wide programs and initiatives supporting all students' holistic development and academic success.
Creator of Let's Talk Business Discussion Session for Business advisors
Created and maintained training schedules of Business advisors.
Supervisor for Administrative Coordinator
Served as a resource person on policies and procedures in Robinson College, the university, and the USG.
Served as a liaison between the students and the college.
Conducted orientation and admissions sessions for potential, new, and transfer students.
Lead Advisor for Online BBA Completion Program
Interdepartmental collaboration facilitator

JULY 2009-DECEMBER 2018

UNDERGRADUATE ADVISOR SUPERVISOR/ADVISOR, RICHARDS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Helped students recognize and achieve their educational goals.
Provided educational guidance and assistance for students by planning schedules, recommending courses, and determining appropriate education solutions for different types of students.
Assisted at-risk students with the hope of these students increasing their GPAs.
Monitored progress toward educational/career goals and met at least once each semester to review the progress to complete the proposed academic program and to discuss grades and other performance indicators.
Maintained an up-to-date Advising Portfolio with a summary record of performance-to-date (grade reports, transcript, requirements completed, etc.).
Hired, trained, and supervised Academic Advisor I and II
Advisor for special populations, such as Business Accelerated Program and Exchange Students.
Coordinated and scheduled academic advisement-related activities.
Arranged orientation and admissions sessions for new and transfer students.
Completed end-of-semester reports for all College of Business courses.

JANUARY 2012-PRESENT

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR, WEST GEORGIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Present prepared materials and record student progress.
Organize and present instructional material at scheduled times per the college catalog descriptions, course syllabi and outlines, and class schedules.
Maintain records of student attendance, student progress, and grade distributions.

Maintain discipline and order during instructional activities.
Teach CISM 2201-Foundations of Computer Applications online and hybrid.
Teach Business Administrative Technology courses online and hybrid

JANUARY 2018-MAY 2018

ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR, UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Presented prepared materials and recorded student progress.
Organized and presented instructional material at scheduled times and places per the college catalog descriptions, course syllabi and outlines, and class schedules.
Utilized the established syllabus and textbook for the course being taught.
Maintained records of student attendance, student progress, and grade distributions.
Maintained discipline and order during instructional activities.
Taught CISM 2201-Fundamentals of Computer Applications online

EDUCATION

FALL 2019-PRESENT

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

Higher Education Administration

3.9 GPA

DECEMBER 2013

SPECIALIST IN EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Media-Instructional Technology Concentration

4.0 GPA

JULY 2011

MASTER OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Business Education

3.9 GPA

DECEMBER 2008

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA

Business Management

3.4 GPA

ACTIVITIES

LIFT -Literacy for Today and Tomorrow 2011-2014

Carrollton High School Speech and Debate Team Volunteer 2016-2019

Georgia Association of Women in Higher Education (GAWHE) committee member, 2012-2018

Georgia Association of Women in Higher Education (GAWHE) Louise McBee Scholarship Committee and Chair, 2013-2018

Central High School Business Advisory Board 2018-Present

Georgia State University Staff Council

Douglas County Schools System Business Advisory Board 2021-present

Abstract

This study aimed to better understand academic advising by examining the perspectives of academic advisors at a Georgia Research 1 institution located in a large city. Initially, the purpose of this case study was to learn more about how academic advisors view effective strategies for boosting their students' performance. Nine academic advisors from a multi-campus institution in the southeastern United States were interviewed for this qualitative study. The participants were asked to complete 30 to 60-minute interviews with the researcher. By evaluating the personal responses used throughout the study, the researcher could identify frequent themes during data collection and analysis. The themes found through the data collection process were interpersonal relationships, progression to graduation, and challenges. The themes related to effective advising strategies were interpersonal relationships and progression to graduation and the themes for barriers were the challenges: department cohesiveness, lack of advisor training, staff retention, and additional advisors. The findings of this research could be used by educational institutions to enhance their academic advising services.

Table of Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Resume.....	vi
Abstract	x
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
CHAPTER I: Introduction	1
Background of the Problem	3
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Methodology Overview	8
Delimitations and Limitations.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	9
Significance of the Study	10
Summary	13
CHAPTER II: Literature Review.....	15
Theoretical Framework	15
Historical Background of Academic Advising	17
NACADA	19
Academic Advising Defined.....	23
The Role of Academic Advising.....	24
Importance of Academic Advising	27
Role of Advising in Student Retention	31
Graduation Rates.....	36
University Support for Academic Advising	36
The Advisor's Role in Academic Advising	39
Effective Academic Advising	42
Barriers to Effective Academic Advising	45
Advisor Barriers.....	47
Academic Advisor Training and Development	48
Student Barriers	51
Summary of Academic Advising Literature	52
CHAPTER III: Methodology.....	55
Research Design.....	56
Role of the Researcher	58
Participants.....	58
Recruitment.....	59
Instrumentation	60
Data Collection	62
Data Analysis	63

Reliability and Validity	65
Trustworthiness	65
Summary	68
CHAPTER IV: Findings	69
Participants	69
Participant Profiles	70
Data Collection and Data Analysis	74
Findings	75
Research Question 1	76
Research Question 2	87
Analysis of Findings	93
Interpersonal Relationships	93
Progression to Graduation	97
Challenges	98
Summary	100
CHAPTER V: Conclusions	102
Summary of the Study	102
Analysis of the Findings	103
Limitations of the Study	107
Recommendations for Future Research	108
Implications of the Study	108
Dissemination of the Findings	109
Conclusion	109
REFERENCES	110
APPENDICES	135
Appendix A: Academic Advisor Interview Questions	136
Appendix B: IRB Approval	139
Appendix C: Recruitment Emails	141
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form	144
Appendix E: Dr. Soden's Survey Instrument	147
Appendix F: Interview Protocol	149
Appendix G: Thank you and Follow up Email	153

List of Tables

Table 1. Research Questions and Data Alignment64

Table 2. Profile of Interview Participants70

List of Figures

Figure 1. Developmental Advising Theory Techniques	8
Figure 2. Hollis' Developmental Advising Model	17
Figure 3. Academic Advising Eras	18
Figure 4. NACADA Core Values Definitions	21
Figure 5. Subscales, number of items, and a sample of each from the Student University Loyalty Instrument.....	26
Figure 6. Process Flow Chart for Selecting Research Studies.....	29
Figure 7. Basic Trustworthiness Criteria	66

Chapter I: Introduction

Most students who enter college hold student success as an overall goal. Institutions must determine what constitutes success before measuring the success of their college students. Universities utilize multiple interventions to guarantee the academic success of students, including academic advising. Academic advising is defined as a collaborative relationship between an advisor and a student in which they discuss the student's time at the university, academic and overall achievement, familiarity with university processes and policies, and general goal setting (Filson & Wittington, 2013; Suvedi et al., 2015). Filson and Wittington (2013) further describe academic advising as a comprehensive support system for students beyond course selection and a transition period during which many students need guidance.

Vincent Tinto, one of the most notable retention researchers today, found that best practices in academic advising should be implemented to ensure student progress toward degree completion (2012). This study will explore academic advising practices at an R1 (Carnegie's highest-level of research production) institution within the University System of Georgia (USG). Specifically, this study will examine the academic advisor's behaviors and self-efficacy in academic advising situations. Chapter I provides a background of the problem, outlines the conceptual framework, defines the research questions and methodology used in the study, and outlines the significance of the study.

Steele and White (2019) found that higher education institutions face crucial structural challenges through educational policy and practice changes. Stephens et al. (2008) found that many colleges and universities depend on historical and conventional norms that make it difficult to change students' expectations, faculty expectations, or institutional priorities and norms. Most universities are also organized among conventional disciplines, presenting an additional

structural challenge. Many disciplines and departments also have internal cultures that discourage cross-disciplinary work and limit outside interactions (Stephens et al., 2008).

Another structural challenge faced by modern colleges and universities in the general access and availability of higher education. Access to education not only encompasses entry or admission to the institution, but also the retention and success of students (Prodan et al., 2015). Within national educational policies, the development of the job market and quality of life is directly impacted by access to higher education (Prodan et al., 2015). Anderson et al. (2014) found that universities across the nation face an ongoing struggle to maintain strong undergraduate academic advising services that fulfill the myriad of students' needs. McGill (2018) found that higher education leadership increasingly trusts commercial logic which only exacerbates the access issues.

This study will utilize Crookston's (1972) Developmental Academic Advising Theory to examine the mental process, environmental interactions, behavioral awareness, problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation abilities of developmental academic advising. Both students and advisors can benefit from developmental advising which involves both teaching and learning experiences for all involved (Grites, 2013). The developmental theory helps advisors detect their students' stages of psychosocial development and encourage them toward improvement in intellectual, psychological, and social areas (Roufs, 2015). According to Abel (1988),

Academic advising must incorporate crucial life responsibilities into its ideas and practices to best serve students and remain a valid campus developmental agent.

Expanding on vital life responsibilities can help students plan academic programs and attain life balance to meet educational goals. Specifically, this research focuses on

improving poor academic advising operations and barriers to successful academic advising (p.18).

According to McGill et al. (2020), critics of pre-professional training believe that higher learning should be regarded as an opportunity to construct *a life plan* – one that includes vocation and career growth, but one that is a more satisfying existence than just a successful professional job. Additionally, the most essential of these considerations is that the advisor-student relationship is a set of developmental activities in which both students and academic advisors participate, with variable degrees of success (Crookston, 2009). Winham (2020) found that Crookston's belief that academic advising is an educational task whose outcome is human growth and development is the final product in all educational tasks and activities – including teaching. Roufs (2015) found that advisors who are well-versed in the theory and practice of developmental advising will be more effective in their roles.

Background of the Problem

Effective academic advising in higher education has become an essential, yet challenging task. As institutions seek to increase enrollment and improve retention, effective academic advising becomes even more essential (Zhang et al., 2019). Academic advisors – often the first university contact for students – serve as resources and academic guides (Mosher, 2017). The role of an academic advisor requires service on the front lines with students by examining, debating, and studying educational policies, practices, and issues at both the organizational and institutional levels (Steele & White, 2019). Burke (2019) found that institutions striving to increase retention must invest significantly in advising staff and programming and that those institutions must provide professional development and a healthy culture that promotes the

services that lead to student retention. Roberts (2018) found a correlation between staff and students that is crucial to improving student retention.

Research shows that several factors can influence the advising process. Braun and Zolfagharian (2016) found that advisors utilize many tools to help determine student needs. Robbins and Zarges (2011) report that the structure of the institution, as well as the institution's assessment needs and goals, dictate a program or department's advising effectiveness. Banta et al. (2002) stated that advising effectiveness has to be evaluated and documented to demonstrate its effectiveness with students. Further, a student's sense of belonging can be strengthened by fostering social integration through various student interactions, including academic advising (Yenney, 2020). Strayhorn (2019) emphasized that belonging is the student's sense of perceived social support on campus, a feeling of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, welcome, respected, valued, and important to the campus community of peers, faculty, and staff. Vianden and Barlow (2014) concluded that an advisor could use simple bonding strategies to establish a positive advisor/advisee relationship. Therefore, advising students requires an advisor to have the capacity to communicate and build relationships with students (Hughey, 2011). Similarly, Lutz et al. (2016) found that students are committed to the advising relationship when they sense their advisor's honesty, integrity, and concern for students. This study will contribute to the body of literature on successful academic advising practices to aid in the retention of undergraduate college students.

Chan et al. (2019) concluded that additional studies should be performed to investigate the effects of different institutional elements on the design of academic advising. Advising frameworks, like universities, can be diverse in their practices and functions (Zarges et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Many scholars disagree on the exact nature of the academic advisor's job duties and obligations (Aydin et al., 2019). Mosher (2017) concluded that high-quality academic advising involves a strong relationship between the student and the advisor. The USG Board of Regents (BOR) (2019) defines academic advising as a process within each USG institution to ensure student success from admission to graduation. This vague definition leads to inconsistent academic advising practices and student services within USG institutions. Lowe and Toney (2000) discovered a correlation between inconsistencies in services and processes and poor advising practices. Troxel and Kyei-Blankson (2020) found that academic planning is at the core of the advising process but there is a lack of consistency between individual descriptions and the extent to which institutions officially define the function. Ultimately, there are many inconsistencies when it comes to academic advising. Many students' needs are not being met by the procedures in place, which may lead to earlier student drop-out (Khalil & Williamson, 2014).

Dowling (2015) emphasized the necessity of institutions not allowing their financial bottom line to cloud the mission for student success and their obligation to the students they serve. Ellis (2014) posits that an advisor educated in student development theory can help students with challenges they may not have foreseen at specific education milestones. Joslin (2018) concluded that a lack of strategic management of advising practices might interfere when distinct colleges or departments within an institution have significantly diverse advising techniques and student results. Nutt (2017) noted that institutions that enable diverse academic advising systems and student success strategies to operate in distinct divisions, departments, and colleges are one example of chaotic academic advising administration. Similarly, Himes and

Schulenberg (2016) found that despite various strategies, there is still a lack of consistency in the advising procedures, structures, and methods utilized in higher education.

The ultimate goal of academic advising is to guide students in their academic journey. The extent of the obligations and functions connected to specific contact with students remains inconsistent across institutions and disciplines (Lowenstein, 2013; Teasley & Buchanan, 2013; White, 2015). Thomas and McFarlane (2018) cited that instead of asking where students are failing, we should instead ask where we are failing students with outdated, or inconsistent, processes and structures. Teasley and Buchanan (2013) determine that what matters most is that students leave college with all the tools they need to succeed in the real world, regardless of how an academic advising program is designed or administered.

Purpose of the Study

This study will explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective. Research into how advisors see things is rare. Most of the research done to improve academic advising has been based on student perceptions, and most of the studies' recommendations for the future include academic advisor perceptions to enhance students' advising experiences. Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) discovered a correlation between student satisfaction and advisor knowledge and approachability. Altruism and wisdom were the best predictors of student satisfaction with an advisor (Paul & Fitzpatrick, 2015). This qualitative case study seeks to examine the academic best practices at an R1 institution within the USG. The findings from this study will aid in interpreting what is required for successful academic advisement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. What do academic advisors consider to be the best academic advising practices?
2. What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to effective academic advising?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Crookston's (1972) Developmental Academic Advising Theory. Crookston's theory identifies ten critical dimensions of academic advisor-student relationships: ability, motivation, rewards, maturity, initiative, self-control, responsibility, learning output, and evaluation. Crookston also claims that an advisor's role and advising profession are primarily defined by developmental advising, which emphasizes the development of the whole student.

Crookston's theory established the mainstream academic advising model used by the National Academic Advising Association: The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) (Lowenstein, 2020). NACADA has adopted Crookston's developmental academic advising theory as the foundation of professional academic advising. The purpose of developmental advising is to encourage and assist students in utilizing college resources to achieve their educational and personal goals (Grites, 2013). Gordon (2019) explained that the principles of developmental academic advising had declared the objective of higher education long before Crookston pointed out the importance of advising in the development of the whole student. Developing the whole student – intellectually, personally, and socially – is a hallmark of academic advising (Gordon, 2019).

Himes (2014) found that developmental advising often requires an open dialogue to help students and an advisor learn and grow together as an advisor to get to know and understand each student. Crookston's (1972) theory outlines several developmental advising techniques to aid an advisor in establishing these relationships with students (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Developmental Advising Theory Techniques

An advisor assist students in learning about courses and programs on their own by pointing them toward relevant resources.	An advisor guides students through learning about poliices and how they might affect them.	An advisor lets students know when deadlines are approaching and then step back to follow up on those deadlines on their own.
An advisor gives class options to studetns and students make their own choices.	An advisor maintains track of students' academic progress by reviewing their records and speaking with them about their educational experiences.	An advisor and student come to an understanding regarding the nature of their working relationship.
An advisor and student work together to choose the best courses based on the students' grades, test scores, and self-identified interests and abilities.	An advisor helps students think about their options and weigh the consequences when making hard decisions.	An advisor provides suggestions for what students can do to aid in deciding on their academic path.
An advisor supports students in determining realistic academic goals based on grades, test scores, and self-awareness.	An advisor cares about the well-being of their students on all levels: personal, social, and intellectual.	An advisor informs students about workshops and seminars in areas like career planning and study skills and courses and class schedules.

Note. Developmental Advising Techniques (Crookston, 1972, p. 13).

Methodology Overview

This qualitative case study will explore the perceptions of advising practices at an urban R1 institution within the USG. Qualitative research is a methodology that examines how individuals and groups comprehend their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The more detailed and deeper the data, the more considerations the researcher must make to identify categories that serve as the foundation for discoveries (Grodal et al., 2021). Case study research is widely utilized and increasingly prevalent in many fields (Baskarada, 2014). The case study

research also provides a more detailed look at a topic and is excellent for practical fields (Nilmanat & Kurniawan, 2021). Comprehension and ability to apply the research topics and reach the case study goal (Rashid et al., 2019). The case study method is a strategy especially suited for understanding a bounded system (Mayan, 2009). Based on the academic advisor's responses to the interview questions, this case study aims to determine the best practices for advising based on those responses.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations – deliberate choices made by the researcher that may impact the study's findings – including selecting advisors from the same R1 institution and selecting advisors in various career stages. Limitations – or those factors that are out of the researcher's control that may impact the study's findings – include the assumption that information by the participants is accurate and truthful. Gagnon (2010) asserts that a limitation of case study research is the limited external validity of the results which limits the ability of another researcher to replicate the study. Gagnon also considers the lack of generalizability of case study research to be a limitation.

Definition of Terms

- Academic advising is when an institutional representative gives educational insight or direction to college students (NACADA, 2021).
- Higher education describes education beyond the secondary level provided by a college or university (Merriam-Webster, 2019).
- NACADA is the Global Community for Academic Advising, the professional organization for academic advisors. NACADA was founded in 1979 and includes over 10,000 members from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Canada, and several other nations (NACADA, 2021).

- NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that aids in collecting and analyzing both qualitative and mixed-methods research. NVivo is intended to assist in organizing unstructured or qualitative data (i.e., those obtained through interviews or open-ended survey replies) (Alasoft, 2021).
- Retention refers to a student who returns to the same college or university (Tinto, 2012).
- Six-year graduation rate refers to the percentage of first-time students who complete their first college degree or certificate within six years of enrollment, including those who drop out or transfer to another institution (Completing College State Report, 2020).
- Student success is described as an academic accomplishment, participation in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance (Kuh et al., 2006).

Significance of the Study

Effective academic advising in higher education has become an essential, yet challenging, task. This task becomes more critical as institutions seek to increase enrollment and improve retention (Zhang et al., 2019). Joslin (2018) emphasized that intelligent and comprehensive implementation based on an analysis of the whole organization and proven practices can help students have a better future. However, the advising practice is not consistently connected with any one philosophical framework. Applying best practices for advising ensures high levels of student satisfaction and engagement (Méndez & Arguello, 2020). To combat these challenges, NACADA has developed the *Pillars of Academic Advising*. The Pillars consist of concepts of academic advising, core values, core competencies of academic advising, and The Council for the Advancement of Standards CAS for academic advising

(NACADA, 2006). These guiding principles reinforce the importance of academic advising in higher education, thereby supporting the university's mission. NACADA's *Academic Advising Concept* is a sequence of intentional interactions with curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning outcomes that synthesizes and contextualizes the student's educational experiences to expand learning beyond university boundaries and timeframes (NACADA, 2006).

While nations, institutions, and students have unique situations, the Core Values guide academic advisors. Academic advisors are committed to their students, institutions, professional practice, and the educational community. Sometimes balancing Core Values is impossible. Academic advisors are urged to reflect and engage other academic advisors in discourse to address conflicts. (NACADA, 2017, p. 1)

NACADA (2017) emphasizes three content categories – conceptual, informational, and relational – as a foundation for effective advisor training and practice. NACADA (2022) also emphasizes the importance of anticipating the needs of students, advisors, and institutions in the rapidly changing 21st century. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) (2019) highlights the importance of organization and leadership, ethics, legal concerns, diversity, equity and access, internal and external interactions, financial resources, technology, facilities, equipment, and access in the services provided to students. Students with access to high-quality academic advising are more likely to plan and accomplish their goals academically (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2013; Vianden, 2015). According to Harrison (2009), understanding that best practices in teaching and learning begin with productive academic advising will assist in giving advising the respect it deserves. Cairncross et al. (2015) found that many of the most common problems in academia have prompted the development and identification of best practices. Additionally, Méndez and Arguello (2020) posit that by applying

best practices, universities may lower attrition and increase student commitment. They further assert that applying best practices for optimum success in advising is crucial to ensure high satisfaction and engagement with students.

The operational definition of “best practice” is those acts that achieve the highest desirable academic outcomes based on evidence and real-life experiences (Nick et al., 2012). Nick et al. (2012) posit that best practices are the process of striving to improve on previous practices to make them into best practices. Egege and Kutieleh (2015) assert that best practices are especially important in a time of cost-cutting and competitiveness for financial resources. Khalil and Williamson (2014) found that students who are well-informed and aware of what it takes to succeed in college are more likely to enroll in classes, stay on track by following their plan of study, and move toward graduation while having a good time. Therefore, colleges and universities must do everything in their power to keep and graduate their students to remain financially viable and good academic advising is a key factor in students’ long-term success in the classroom (Walters & Seyedian, 2016).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2020), in a 2014 study of 5,983 institutions, reported that 60.1 percent of students enrolled in four-year post-secondary institutions graduated within six years. Within the USG, during the same time frame, the six-year graduation rate at four-year institutions was 63.2 percent. The specific USG institution used for this case study reported a 53 percent graduation rate during the same time frame.

According to research, students’ academic achievement, retention, and advancement depend on their relationships with an academic advisor (Wang & Houdyshell, 2021). Dowling (2015) asserts that the advising profession needs to make more connections between advising, student growth, and achievement. By following best practices, advisors can learn the most

effective skills and strategies to increase student success. Joslin (2018) asserts that the time has come for a paradigm shift in academic advising. Advisors should examine their existing methods and connect to their own and their organizations' concepts of what it means to provide advisement. Himes (2021) says that his thought is essential before discussing the best practices in the field. The power of high-quality academic advising becomes clearer as an advisor shifts their focus away from the profession's intellectual, theoretical, and practical basis toward its impact (Kimball & Campbell, 2013). This study focuses on academic advising strategies that help students succeed and graduate on time.

Summary

Within the last decade, the importance of academic advising has become more prevalent. Student retention, enrollment, and six-year graduation rates have been linked to academic advising (Cuseo, 2003). As a result, the researcher must recognize that its efficiency is crucial to the institution's and student's success. The purpose of this study is to investigate the practices and characteristics of the best academic advising approaches from the perspective of the academic advisor. Academic advisors' sole role in this study will be advised; there will be no teaching or other duties. Using one university within the USG, this qualitative case study aims to learn about the best techniques for academic advising. University academic advising has become an increasingly important but complicated responsibility. As colleges and universities strive to expand enrollment and enhance retention, this work becomes more urgent (Zhand et al., 2019). According to Joslin (2018), students can look forward to a brighter future with the support of a well-thought-out implementation based on the evaluation of the entire organization and tried-and-true methods. The results of this study will help to clarify what is needed to provide successful academic advising. It is, therefore, necessary to obtain a deeper understanding of how

university leadership may view academic advising and how decisions will be made with regard to those who will be affected by those practices.

Chapter II: Literature Review

College students' decisions to stay or leave the institution are influenced by many factors, including academic advisement (Cuseo, 2003) This study aims to examine what an advisor believes to constitute successful academic advising and what obstacles to advising exist. This chapter will present a brief history of academic advising, explore the evolution of academic advising, and provide the working definition of academic advising used in this study. Additionally, this chapter will focus on the importance of academic advising and an advisor in student success and graduation. The researcher will present a theoretical foundation for the research in this chapter and an overview of the existing literature on effective academic advising.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

To understand advising, the researcher considered the systems theory of theoretical framework because this theory reveals information about how advising functions. Bridgen (2017) claimed that systems theory is used to describe problems, which varies from Western science holistically. According to Waldrow (2020), Descartes' theory of perception established such a concept, building on the ideas of his forefathers while avoiding the ludicrous image of images being "squeezed through the optical nerve" and then "passing along to the brain's ventricles." Since Descartes, scientists have solved scientific problems by breaking them apart and reducing them constantly into increasingly smaller bits. The nature of conventional scientific inquiry is the scientific method and isolating and modifying variables in controlled environments (Bridgen, 2017).

However, while this approach would have been a good theoretical framework to use, the researcher decided to implement Crookston's Developmental Advising Theory because it would improve advising and identify productive approaches for academic advisement, which would

help strengthen academic advisement for all institutions and promote student retention and growth. Aiding the entire student improves the process's quality and provides students with the best advisement experience possible.

Burns Crookston integrated the ideas of many developmental theorists into the profession of academic advising in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Gordon, 1994). Developmentally focused advising seeks to provide an environment where students and an advisor may work together to achieve common goals and help students grow as individuals (Crookston, 1972). For more than 20 years, the phrase *developmental academic advising* has been widely used by academic advisors and academic researchers to describe how to help students achieve their educational goals (Grites, 2013; Grites & Gordon, 2009).

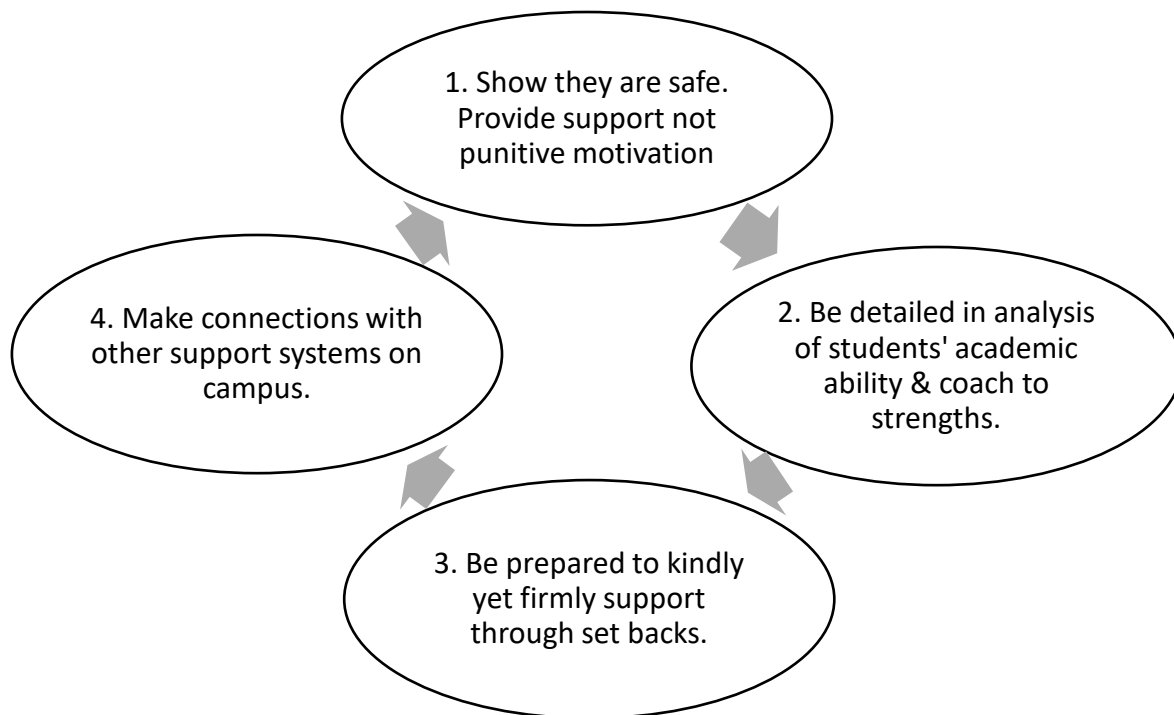
One of the most fundamental and comprehensive approaches to academic advising is developmental academic advising (Grites, 2013). According to Grites (2013), developmental advising has four primary characteristics, or components: a) practice, 2) comprehensive, 3) focused on student improvement, and 4) shared activity. Anderson et al. (2014) verified that while institutions get many benefits from developmental advising, emphasizing this strategy ignores the wide range of student demands today's students face.

If developmental advising is a teaching tool, one of its goals must be to teach students how to deal with these complex interactions (Laff, 1994). Academic advising has evolved from a prescriptive to a developmental process to help students improve their ability to solve problems and make decisions (Menke et al., 2020). The developmental academic advising theory states that an advisor assists students in achieving their personal, professional, and academic objectives (Grites, 2013). The best approach is to encourage the student holistically, but most institutions have different methods of academic advisement (Zhang et al., 2017). Regardless of what is going

on in their personal lives, it might impact their academic performance (Kardash, 2020). Hollis (2009) shared a developmental advising model and asserts that it is a procedure that must be followed. (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2

Hollis' Developmental Advising Model



Note: Developmental Advising Model (Hollis, 2009, p. 34).

Historical Background of Academic Advising

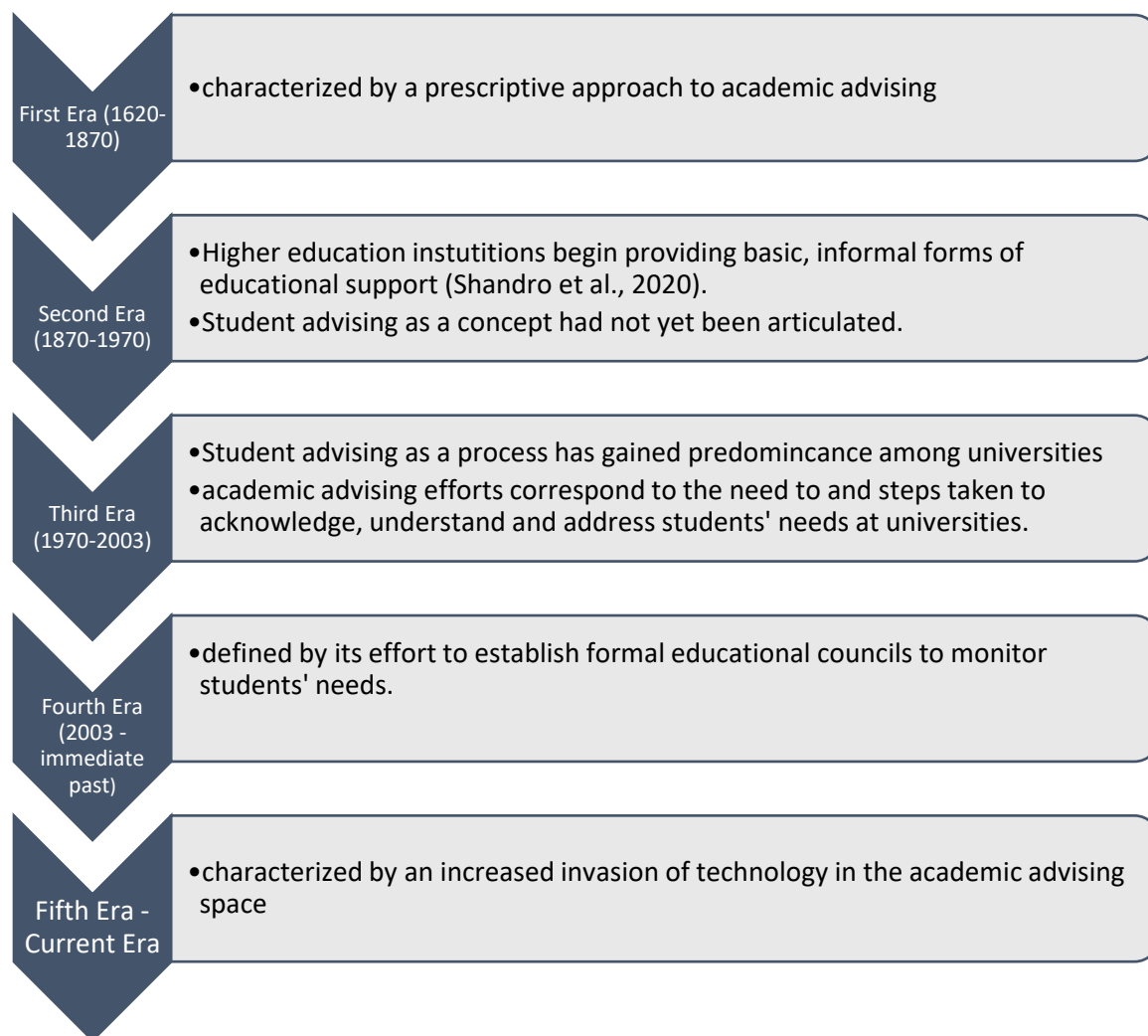
To understand the field of academic advising today, we must understand the humble beginnings of student advisement. As early as the 1200s, senior university administrators and academic staff advised students on moral issues, intellectual habits, and extracurricular activities (Fussy, 2018). In the mid-19th century, college and university administrators required new students to meet with faculty members to determine their trajectories and solicit guidance and advice (Powers & Wartalski, 2021). Fussy (2018) asserted that some circumstances that led to

the formalization of academic advising at higher education institutions included government policies and performance-based funding, increased student population, and student attrition rates. As the number of students pursuing post-secondary education grew and the breadth of academic offerings broadened, educational institutions began to provide students with more support and resources to help them succeed (Powers & Wartalski, 2021).

Himes and Schulenberg (2016) identify four distinct eras in the history of academic counseling (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Academic Advising Eras



Himes and Schulenberg (2016) describe the first era as one defined by a more prescriptive approach to academic advising. Advising often consisted of faculty members assisting students to navigate the required coursework with little other advisement taking place. By 1870, academic advising had become a clearly defined practice in higher education (Grites et al., 2016). The third era resulted in increased amounts of research into the work of academic advisors. Research during this time resulted in several academic advising theories and models as well (Grites et al., 2016). By 1984, academic advising had fully evolved from a routine, isolated activity performed by faculty to a holistic developmental approach performed by specialized student personnel and professional academic advisors to best assist students in achieving academic, career, and personal developmental goals (Cook, 2009). The fourth era of academic advising spans from 2003 to the immediate past and represents a time when advising was studied extensively as an educational phenomenon (Himes & Schulenberg, 2016).

NACADA

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA) was chartered in 1979 under the name National Academic Advising Association. Due to the evolution of the organization to include membership from not only all 50 states, but also Puerto Rico, Canada, and several other international countries, the organization was renamed NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (Sannes, 2018). Al-Asmi and Thumiki (2014) describe NACADA as a nonprofit organization in the United States that supports and promotes academic advising in higher education. They further state, “academic advising must fundamentally address three main issues: curriculum, pedagogy, and learning outcomes” (p. 4). Fox and Martin (2017) describe NACADA as a global community for primary-role advisors, counselors, faculty members, and administrators, as well as for students working to improve the educational

development of students. Since its inception, NACADA has reached thousands of advising professionals through various professional development tools.

The NACADA Journal, which first debuted in 1981 (Cook, 2009) serves to elevate the voices of academic advisors and their worth even further by expanding its scholarship to include more diverse samples, forms of advising, and student outputs (Alvarado & Olson, 2020).

In 1986, NACADA hosted its first Summer Institute offering professional and faculty advisors as well as advising administrators the opportunity to learn and grow in the profession (Cook, 2009). Additionally, NACADA established a scholarship fund for members pursuing graduate degrees (Packard & Jeffers, 2013). Through the creation of NACADA, professional advisors no longer needed to look for places to present professional programs, discuss academic advising duties, tasks, issues, and ideas, or publish their views (Grites & Gordon, 2009). The Global Community for Academic Advising established core values for academic advising (see Figure 4) and published the values for member input (Grites & Gordon, 2009). The core values were adopted as NACADA guidelines in 1994 (Cook, 2009).

Figure 4

NACADA Core Values Definitions

Caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An academic advisor responds to and is accessible to others in ways that challenge, support, nurture, and teach. •An advisor builds relationships through empathetic listening and compassion for students, colleagues, and others.
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An academic advisor values and is dedicated to excellence in all dimensions of student success. •An advisor is committed to students, colleagues, institutions, and the profession through assessment, scholarly inquiry, life-long learning, and professional development.
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An academic advisor motivates, encourages, and supports students and the greater educational community to recognize their potential, meet challenges, and respect individuality.
Inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Academic advisors respect, engage, and value a supportive culture for diverse populations. •An advisor strives to create and support environments that consider the needs and perspectives of students, institutions, and colleagues through openness, acceptance, and equity.
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An academic advisor acts intentionally by ethical and professional behavior developed through reflective practice. •An advisor values honesty, transparency, and accountability to the student, institution, and the advising profession.
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An academic advisor acts by the profession's values of advising for the greater good of students, colleagues, institutions, and the advising profession.
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •An academic advisor honors the inherent value of all students. •An advisor builds positive relationships by understanding and appreciating 'students' views and cultures, maintaining a student-centered approach and mindset, and treating students with sensitivity and fairness.

Source. NACADA, 2017.

Grites and Gordon (2009) posit that the creation of a national advising organization was a long-overdue notion citing the extraordinary growth of NACADA as evidence. NACADA as an organization helped professionals in the field better define and describe their professional roles. NACADA (2017) describes the ideal academic advisor as one who acts as a mentor in an interactive connection with students to increase their self-awareness and sense of fulfillment. Fox and Martin (2017) assert that the goal of NACADA is to promote and support high-quality

academic advising in higher education institutions, which will help all students meet their educational goals. To aid in the pursuit of this goal, NACADA has launched a website and a monograph series on its scholarly research and development (Cook, 2009). As American college courses grew in diversity and complexity, the need for increased and more involved academic advisors also grew (Grites & Gordon, 2009). Al-Asmi and Thumiki (2014) assert that both the leadership and academic advisors at a university should evaluate the strategic functions of advisement offered by NACADA to adopt more effective academic advising practices.

NACADA's impact has helped transform advising from a scheduling function into an all-encompassing approach to the whole student (Grites & Gordon, 2009). Academic advisors can now enjoy an international group of more than 14,000 members dedicated to advancing academic advising on a global scale through frequently published monographs, books, and articles, both in print and online (White, 2015). NACADA hosts webinars and conferences that are presented at the regional, national, and global levels to spread the ever-growing body of literature on academic advising (White, 2015).

In a 2018 article published in *Academic Advising Today*, the then President of NACADA, Amy Sannes, wrote

It is estimated that NADADA's membership is reaching 14,000, with 360 Canadian and 161 non-Canadian members (outside of North America). Our members come from 35 different nations. On a worldwide scale, NACADA is ready to assist student success. The association's first conference was held in Vermont in 1977, and it included Canadian members. For the advancement of academic advising around the world, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising continues to build meaningful connections

worldwide. It was requested that NACADA send a delegation from four nations to demonstrate how their work benefits student progress in each country.

Academic Advising Defined

Many universities provide academic advising to better serve and support their students (Arguello, 2021). Academic advising is a tool that colleges and universities can use to promote student happiness and retention and aid students in selecting and committing to a specific major (Montag et al., 2012). Likewise, academic advising has been described as a distinct endeavor by advising scholars (Himes, 2014). Kimball and Campbell (2013) deem academic advising as “an intentional process shaped by several ways of thinking about students” (p. 4). Miller (2012) described academic advising as a service that encompasses providing support services to students through coaching, informing, counseling, disciplining, mentoring, or teaching.

Grites (1979) proposed that academic advising begins with the admissions process and continues until graduation; it involves faculty, student affairs staff, and peer students. In short, he described academic advising as a complex process that encompasses the entire university constantly. Arguello (2021) posits that within academic advising, a student and an academic advisor connect to help the student with problem-solving, resource identification, and goal-setting in the learner’s academic and professional life, respectively. Chrystal (2018) describes advising as the relationship between an advisor and an individual or group of individuals with the same goals. Elliot (2020) asserts that an academic advisor is the first resource that students will need to begin their post-secondary education path because they help students plan for and achieve their educational goals. McGill (2021) states that advising can be described as a unique place of connection for an advisor and student; advising is an interactive endeavor, not one in

which the student is the passive recipient of information. Hutson et al. (2014) concluded that ultimately, advising is meant to assist students in identifying their skills and maximizing them.

Because many offices on university campuses provide advising services, a collaborative effort is required if students are to obtain consistent, current, and suitable guidance (Folsom et al., 2015). All constituency members must understand its precise meaning to accurately study and duplicate academic advising's functional and advantageous characteristics (Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemyer, 2018). A 2014 NACADA task force defined advising as a process that emphasized relationships, care for the entire student, and aimed for meaningful outcomes. Cook (2009) posits that the culmination of various definitions of advising shows that the focus of academic advising is on the student's personal growth and development.

Academic advising is the application of academic knowledge to help students and members of the campus and community navigate academic interactions (Larson, Johnson, Aiken-Wisniewski, & Barkemyer, 2018). In their interactions with students, academic advisors frequently take on the role of an adult educator (Alvarez & Towns, 2016).

The Role of Academic Advising

Academic advising is considered an effective technique to assist students in overcoming barriers to academic performance by giving academic and non-academic help (Fussy, 2018; Ogude et al., 2012). McConnell (2018) states that the method by which an advisor carries out their responsibilities could be the difference between successful and challenging student experiences. Additionally, Lopez (2018) found that advising is influential in student success. Nutt (2008) described advisors as cultural guides that help students find their way on campus, link them with campus resources, and ensure academic and personal success.

Vianden and Barlow (2015) conducted a research study to evaluate the association between student views of academic advising quality and student loyalty to the university. Their study used a sample of 1,207 undergraduate students from three Midwest comprehensive institutions who completed the Student University Loyalty Instrument (SULI), a 75-item survey. The SULI was derived from the 86-item relationship quality-based student loyalty (RQSL) (Hennig-Tharau et al., 2001). The ten SULI subscales were based on a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). One subscale measures student engagement based on frequency (1 = never to 6 = more than once a week). Figure 4 illustrates the SULI subscales, which included items defining institutional characteristics (quality of instructors, student services, staff, and facilities) and student attitudinal and behavioral characteristics (intent to leave, perceived skill development, frequency of student engagement, initial impressions, institutional fit, and satisfaction). Advising and Student Loyalty averaged subscale item values to obtain subscale scores for further analysis. The SULI gathered pre-college characteristics, including categorization (i.e. academic year), gender, age, race, and international student status. It also collected respondents' present institution's rank among alternatives before enrolling (university rank), parental education, and driving time from the institution to the student's homes.

Figure 5

Subscales, number of items, and a sample of each from the Student University Loyalty Instrument

Subscale	No. of Items	Sample Item
Quality of Instructors	8	My instructors are considerate of students.
Quality of Staff	7	Staff at my university treat me with care.
Quality of Student Services	7	My university provides high-quality academic advising.
Quality of Facilities	3	My university provides high-quality recreational facilities.
Perceived Skill Development	8	My university is helping me refine my interpersonal communication skills.
Frequency of Student Engagement	6	I communicate with my instructors about academic concerns.
Initial Impressions	9	I knew this university had a good reputation.
Institutional Fit	4	I feel connected to my university.
Satisfaction	4	This university was the right choice for me.
Intent to Leave	3	I plan to withdraw from my university within 6 months.
Student Loyalty	8	I care about my university.

Note. The subscales are listed in the order in which they appear in the SULI survey.

According to the study, student loyalty and satisfaction with academic advising are linked (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Vianden and Barlow (2015) found that student-university relationships were examined using items like “my university provides quality academic advising” (advisequal) and SULI subscales. They also found that academic advising was seen favorably by students who shared certain demographic features. The results of the study also indicate that simple bonding strategies can help establish advisor/advisee relationships.

Kardash (2020) concluded that asking open-ended questions is an excellent method to start building a relationship with the student to take ownership of their goals. Winham (2020) asserts that a critical advisor insists that students are a human being first and foremost on the path to being corpses, and the education of their hearts, minds, and souls is what matters. Lutz et al. (2016) concluded that the values of honesty, integrity and genuine concern for students’ well-being may draw students to a program and help them stay engaged.

Importance of Academic Advising

Research has shown that academic advising significantly impacts student development within higher education institutions (He & Hutson, 2016). However, advising-as-teaching and learner-centered advising are methods that emphasize the students' educational objectives advisors serve (He & Hutson, 2016). One of the most compelling arguments supporting the academic advising perspective is that advising is one of the few enterprises in higher education that can reach all students (White, 2015). White (2015) asserts that academic advising is at the heart of the new paradigm, which continues the more than century-old belief that higher education students should not progress unaided. An advisor, like a first responder, understands how students negotiate their respective universities (Steele & White, 2019). Students can benefit from the institution's efforts to provide a wide range of resources and assistance in the pursuit of enriching educational experiences and personal growth and development (Obaje & Jeawon, 2021).

The two key parties involved in the advising process are the advisor and the advisee. Researchers should investigate both the perspectives of advisors and advisees to ascertain the benefits and barriers to effective academic advising. Suvedi et al. (2015) led a research study to investigate the perspectives of students on academic advising and to elicit their ideas for ways to enhance it. Academic advising is an integral component of a college system that can assist students in finding solutions to the academic challenges they face and achieving success in their future academic and professional endeavors. Assessments completed by students have been utilized by educational institutions at the higher education level to evaluate the quality of instruction and academic advice. To be more explicit, the goals of the study were to perform an analysis of students' opinions of academic advising over the course of ten years and to determine

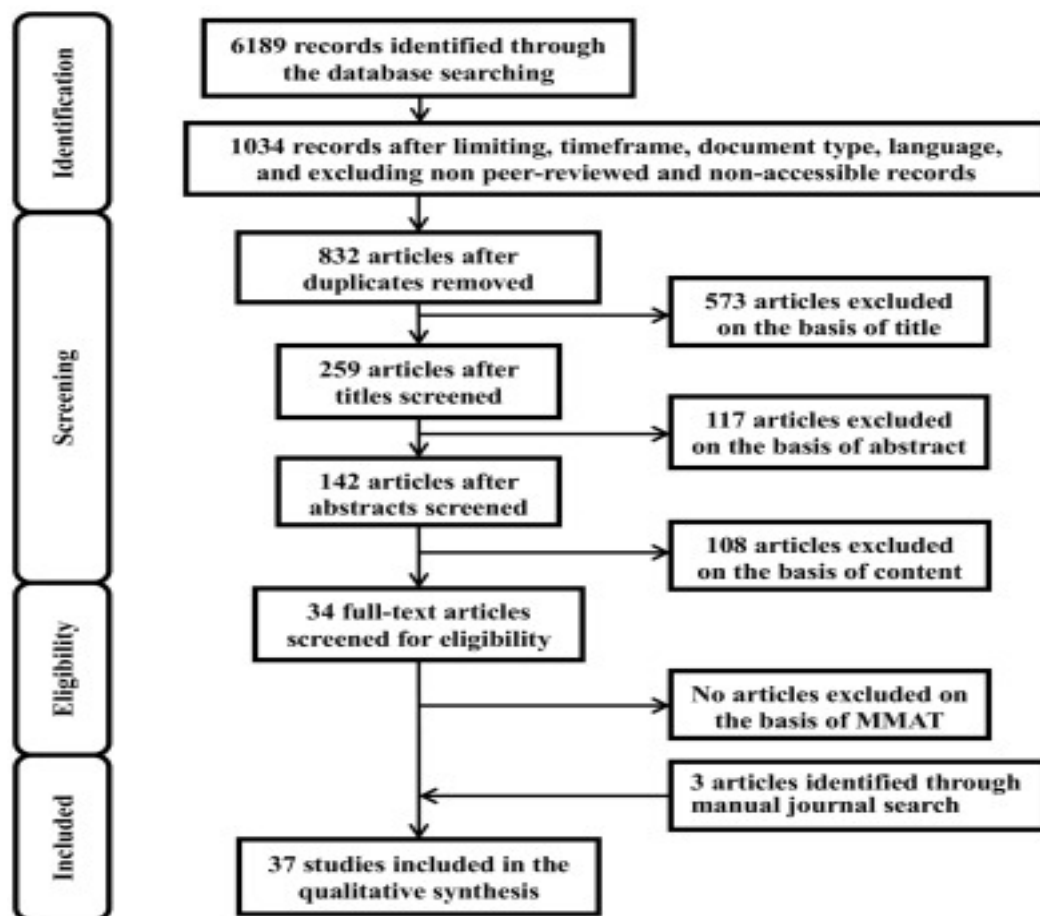
whether students' perceptions of academic advising alter depending on their demographic traits and academic years. The responses given by respondents to online surveys that were carried out between 2005 and 2013 revealed that, overall, respondents held favorable opinions of academic advising services (Suvedi et al., 2015). In general, younger students and female students expressed more contentment with the academic advising that they received compared to older students and male students (Suvedi et al., 2015). The respondents said that there is a need to improve advice about participation in study abroad programs and volunteer opportunities. The article addressed both the positive and negative aspects of academic advising that are unique to the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) at Michigan State University, as well as offered some suggestions for how these aspects could be improved (Suvedi et al., 2015). The author recommends for future research that colleges can ask academic advisors for their thoughts and suggestions regarding how to improve academic advising (Suvedi et al., 2015).

In 2019, Chan et al. published a comprehensive literature assessment on undergraduate academic advising in nursing programs. Their assessment included literature from six electronic databases (e.g., Premier, CINAHL, ERIC, Medline, Teacher Reference Center, and Scopus) yielding 6,189 articles. Chan et al. used the phrase “academic advising” to narrow the results to 37 articles. The researchers used a Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) to determine whether studies were eligible for inclusion in the review. MMAT was also used to evaluate all manuscripts considered in this review. Figure 6 outlines the process flow chart for selecting research studies. This comprehensive literature assessment resulted in an examination of students’ experiences, preferences, benefits, and hurdles to getting aid from advisors to identify existing academic advising schemes and analyze the viewpoints of both advisors and advisees (Chan et al., 2019). Chan et al.’s literature assessment also raised concerns about current nursing

academic advising schemes (i.e., lack of knowledge about the programs; methods of communication utilized; time management; advisor training; evaluation of outcomes; and the impact on nursing education). Chan et al. concluded that additional research is needed to determine how the academic advising scheme's components affect advising results which can then be used to formulate a more detailed academic advising scheme.

Figure 6

Process Flow Chart for Selecting Research Studies



Advising is significant and is associated with student success, contentment, and retention (Emekako & van der Westhuizen, 2021; Zhang et al., 2019). Providing students with the best possible chance of success has always been a crucial and challenging undertaking in higher

education (Cook, 2009). Steele and White (2019) emphasized that it is essential to remember that academic advising has a vital educational component and that students gain a lot from working with an academic advisor. Academic advisors help students figure out what they want to do with their lives after high school and how to get there (Khalil & Williamson, 2014). Furthermore, academic advisors assist students with various issues, including selecting the appropriate major, curriculum major, certificates, internships, and other campus resources (Khalil & Williamson, 2014).

Academic advising encompasses a wide range of objectives and advising is generally assumed to act in the best interests of students (Filson & Whittington, 2013; Lutz et al., 2016). In addition, academic advising has evolved into a holistic process that impacts college and university students' academic, professional, and personal growth (Kirk-Kuwaye & Sano-Franchini, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2019). Hart-Baldrige (2020) states that academic advising aids students in establishing a sense of purpose and context for their studies. Larson et al. (2018) suggest that advising utilizes subject-matter expertise to assist students, faculty, and community members in successfully navigating academic interactions associated with higher education. Al-Asmi and Thumiki (2014) affirmed that student advising is critical to student development and empowerment and essential to an institution's overall operation and success. Kardash (2020) declares that conversations must go beyond academics to develop meaningful relationships. Ender et al. (1982) assert that students' intellectual and personal growth can only be positively impacted if academic and student affairs divisions work together; academic advising should be the foundation for this collaboration. According to Turner and Thompson (2014), the academic advising structure arose as a fundamental component of a modern education system, creating a more precise grasp of how to support students in college.

Role of Advising in Student Retention

The number of students who enroll and graduate from a university makes up the university's undergraduate retention rates (Tinto, 2012). Caruth (2018) states that student retention rates are commonly used to measure a college's success or failure and are frequently used for assessing the performance of institutions. Tinto's (2012) research consistently finds that student interaction with academic programs and professionals will either help or hinder the pursuit of a degree, resulting in possible dissatisfaction and failure. Tinto's (1975, 2007) research resulted in one of the first models of student retention to highlight institutional factors as causes of student attrition. Young-Jones et al. (2013) designed a study to further investigate Tinto's findings. Their study looked at 611 undergraduate students recruited from a variety of psychology courses (e.g., Introductory Psychology through Senior Seminar in Psychology). Study participants were mostly White/Caucasian (90.5%) with an average age of 18-25 years (94.7%), which is typical of a Midwestern university. An online experiment management platform was used for college data. Six components were rotated using a Varimax rotation algorithm based on the scree plot. Advisor accountability, student responsibility, student self-efficacy, student study skills, and perceived assistance were among the six interpretable characteristics of the rotating solution.

Student responsibility ($F(3,266) = 13.75, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.05$), advisor empowerment, and advisor accountability all showed significant differences. Academic advising can momentarily impact many aspects of a student's academic experience, from self-efficacy development to the practical application of study skills. The availability and frequency with which advisors interact with students are closely linked to elements that have been shown to influence student

achievement. Academic advising is a technique that allows institutions to meet students where they are in terms of personal responsibility, study skills, self-efficacy, and perceived support.

Additionally, Young-Jones et al.'s (2013) study aimed to find characteristics that predicted the participants' Grade Point Average (GPA). A student's GPA is a widely used indicator of academic achievement. The resulting model was significant at the 0.05 level, with $F(10,452) = 18.23$, $p = 0.001$, and an explained 28% of the variance in GPA. Researchers found that student expectations of their advisors, as well as advisors' ability to achieve those expectations, are two of the most important variables in student success (i.e., student study skills and student self-efficacy). The results of the study indicate that meeting with an advisor predicted student accountability and study abilities related to multiple regression analysis. Further, results suggested that students who met with their advisors at least once every semester had a greater Perceived Support Level than those who met less frequently.

Young-Jones et al. (2013) concluded that first-generation college students encounter distinct problems relating to their perceptions of their capacity to thrive in college. They determined that advisors could provide assistance based on the student's skills and needs and that academic advising evaluation should be advanced and performed the same way classrooms are assessed.

Outside of course-faculty interactions, Young-Jones et al. (2013) found that various overlapping institutional endeavors influence student growth. They further posit that academic advising can assist students in creating meaningful learning experiences, so assisting them in achieving their educational, career, and life objectives. Few universities have organized programs to encourage advising as a strategy to assist students to stay in school, in the manner of the survey (Young-Jones et al., 2013).

Young-Jones et al. (2013) concluded that academic advisors can comprehend institutional expectations and translate them into terms that help students understand how to complete their degrees. They found that academic advising occurs when student behavior and institutionally controlled settings collide, potentially affecting student progress. They further concluded that advising can assist students in identifying personal qualities and interests relevant to their educational and professional objectives.

Young-Jones et al. (2013) posit that the goal of future research should be to gain a deeper understanding of the advising relationship and emphasize that academic advising is one aspect of a student's academic journey that can be expanded further to assist students in achieving their educational and career objectives.

Buchanan et al. (2018) similarly concluded that the student retention rate in higher education is becoming increasingly pivotal. White (2015) asserts that one of the most pressing challenges in today's American schools and universities is boosting student retention and shortening graduation times. White continues by concluding that the problem of student retention is becoming a costly problem for institutions in higher education, stating that colleges and universities are worried about retention because it costs a lot to keep students and that it costs more to recruit new students than it does to retain the ones that you already have. Despite this challenge, colleges and universities must contend with the challenge of keeping and assisting students in completing their academic degrees (Caballero, 2020). Hurjui et al. (2020) assert that college administrators place student retention and success at the top of an institution's strategic goals.

Caruth (2018) asserts that colleges and universities need to know if they satisfy the educational needs of students and White (2015) posits that good academic advising should be a

primary measure of success with individual academic advisors as the focus of the evaluation.

Robbins (2011) stated that even though individual academic advisor performance reviews are a part of the assessment, evaluation tends to be episodic and person-centered, whereas assessment is a holistic and continuous process undertaken at the programming level (Robbins & Zarges, 2011). Cuseo (2003) emphasized that evaluating the effectiveness of academic advisors and advisement programs sends a strong and explicit message to all members of the college community that advising is a critical professional responsibility; failing to do so, on the other hand, sends the message that the institution does not value this student service. (p. 18)

According to Swecker et al. (2014), student persistence, attrition, and departure are directly linked to student retention. Tinto (2017) asserts that it is the quality that enables someone to persevere in achieving a goal in the face of adversity. McQueen (2009) uses the term attrition to describe instances in which students drop out of school or are unable to complete their studies. As a result, students become more committed and persistent when they feel like they have a place and are valued by their peers (Tinto, 2017).

Taylor (2005) posits that student attrition is a global concern. She noted that students do not intend to drop out when they enroll and that unfavorable situations within and outside the institution may have forced them to withdraw. Siekpe and Barksdale (2013) state that attrition and retention among college students are two of the most pressing issues facing higher education institutions today. Therefore, establishing a solid connection between academic advisement and overall academic success will improve retention (McGill, 2018). Grites (1979) states that the most important part of the retention effort is deciding how to accomplish the institution's goal and asserts that evaluating academic advising practices is vital to making those decisions.

Higher education assessment has become a major focus of external entities, but the primary purpose of assessment should be to determine if programmatic goals are being met and if students' learning requirements and goals are being met (Robbins & Zarges, 2011). Smith and Allen (2014) insisted that researchers study the area of student achievement assessment further since the knowledge gained in advising sessions may be a critical factor in whether students completed their degrees. Smith and Allen further assert that education professionals frequently cite advising as a vital component of the desired outcome: retention. Researchers consistently report that retention should be an institution-wide goal and that academic advising should be one of the most critical indicators of reaching those goals (Harris, 2018; White, 2015). However, with deteriorating state proceeds, elevated transfer rates, and poor retention rates, academic advisors are increasingly vital in supporting and maintaining students at their institutions (Elliott, 2020).

Equally important, academic advising strategies to support student retention often promote clear and meaningful university experiences, enhancing a student's educational path and prosperous future (Cuseo, 2003). The delivery of academic advising must be coordinated with the university's teaching and learning goals rather than solely responsible for these changes to maintain stable retention rates (Zarges et al., 2018). O'Keeffe (2013) insists that academic advisors must stay current on student advising needs and should continue exploring methods to improve their interactions with students to encourage success and retention. O'Keeffe further asserts that when students have a strong relationship with a university staff member, they are less likely to leave their degree early. Similarly, Vianden (2016) states that an academic advisor should function as an agent of student relationship management, strengthening the bond between students and their institutions to impact retention rates in college. Grites (1979) determined that

the advising process has been successful in that attempt, resulting in more excellent student retention rates and as a result, effective advising is critical to student success.

Graduation Rates

Tiroyabone and Strydom (2021) asserted that one of the best ways to improve students, families, and communities' economic prospects is to earn a college degree. Six-year graduation rates at four-year colleges have become the accepted standard of measurement in American higher education and hover around 60% (US Department of Education, 2019). Graduation rates reflect the overall quality of a university's academic programs and the efficiency with which a campus meets the expectations and needs of its students (Al-Haddad et al., 2018).

Lynch and Lungrin (2018) propose that an advisor can help students navigate their courses and reduce the time to earn a degree. Equally important, academic advisors significantly impact student graduation rates, but they also substantially impact academic institutions' primary teaching and learning missions because of their work (Menke et al., 2020). Moreover, a student's graduation is expedited when provided the best advisement possible and follows, resulting in less wasted time and a faster road to graduation (Crocker et al., 2015).

University Support for Academic Advising

Chief academic officers often make policies and practices that impact how advising is performed at their schools (Menke et al., 2020). College administrators must continually assess their advising services to stay present with the students' advising demands and better advising (Sudevi et al., 2015). Strayhorn (2015) states that access to effective advising is the first step to student success in college. Caruth (2018) elaborates by stating that access to effective advising in higher education ensures that students have a successful postsecondary experience. State legislatures have begun tying state funds to a college's retention and graduation rates,

necessitating time-to-degree initiatives on many college campuses (Lynch & Lungrin, 2018).

Lynch and Lungrin (2018) further posit that a student's ability to succeed in college is improved when the student's holistic needs and concerns are addressed beyond enrollment. Mosher (2017) found that it is widely accepted that academic advising plays a significant role in fostering student success. Therefore, the success of a student's academic career is directly tied to the quality of the advice they receive (Vianden & Barlow, 2015). Similarly, retention, graduation, and subsequent career attainment have long been considered the three pillars of college success (Dean, 2015). Colleges must first focus on valuable indicators of student success if they are to make significant advances in completion across the institution (Bailey, 2016). Success in higher education provides most students with more meaningful opportunities for the rest of their lives (Waters et al. 2016). As a result, Chiteng Kot (2014) mentioned that several colleges and universities had extended academic support services and programmatic initiatives to boost student achievement. Vianden and Barlow (2015) concluded that an academic advisor who builds strong interpersonal relationships, trust, shared commitment, and student satisfaction improves academic advising and increases student retention and graduation rates.

Allen et al. (2014) dictate that students need access to an advisor and it is an institution's responsibility to facilitate that access. In doing this, learning through advising is linked to student learning and institutions have a responsibility to assist the advisor in seeing and understanding how their professional competency is related to the achievement of the students they serve (Woods, 2014).

Josh Smith (2013), in his role as the, then, NACADA president, conducted a poll in 2011 to look at how university administrators viewed academic advising on their campuses. Before Smith's study, the viewpoint of high-level administrators on academic advising was mostly

unknown. Smith (2013), using the results of his study, urged scholars to look at the importance administrators place on academic advising and their understanding of the function that academic advising plays in an institution's teaching and learning purpose. He found that chief academic officers (CAOs) can influence how advising is structured at their universities.

Based on Smith's urging, Menke et al. (2020) reexamined the results of the study to see how CAOs at two- and four-year public and private institutions in the United States view advisor activities related to the fundamental skills of advising. Menke et al. used the NACADA Academic Core Competencies Model (see Figure 3) to produce a five-point Likert scale (ranging from *not important* to *very important*) survey instrument. The twenty skills were divided into three categories: conceptual, informational, and relational. The survey was then distributed to university administrators using the Qualtrics Survey platform. Participants were asked to rate the value of 17 specific advising activities. Menke et al.'s study included a representative sample of CAOs from 1,836 two-year and four-year schools and assessed academic advising in standard and non-traditional modalities. The confidentiality of the data was ensured by employing password-protected software that kept the names and institutions of the participants hidden.

Menke et al.'s (2020) study found that little is known about the expertise and understanding of CAOs regarding academic advising. According to the study, some advisors have limited communication with administrators and would lack access to critical information needed to make an informed judgment about who advises students. Findings also suggest that academic advising has progressed from simply supplying curricular information to helping students develop problem-solving and decision-making abilities.

Despite these findings, Menke et al. (2020) concluded that the field is not well defined or and academic advising is not practiced consistently across settings. They further concluded that it

has become vital to professionalize academic advising by establishing consistent standards for how it is done. Additional research proposes that an advisor helps students in various ways and those academic advisors should provide opportunities for university students to reflect on their interests, abilities, and shortcomings to aid in learning and developing appropriate study plans (Cheng et al., 2017; Workman, 2015). University administrators, instructors, students, and advisors still lack awareness about the critical role that advising plays in a student's academic success (McGill, 2021).

The Advisor's Role in Academic Advising

An academic advisor's unique position in a student's life means they can improve their general education experience (Egan 2015). An advisor can meet all of a student's intellectual, financial, developmental, and psychological needs (Fox & Martin, 2017). Therefore, academic advisors should often consider how they can improve the proactive nature of their service offerings (Museus & Ravello, 2021).

Shockley-Zalabak (2012) declares that for the academic advisors of today to be effective, they must consider becoming purposeful interaction designers to help build experiences that will benefit students now and into the future. Notably, the advisor's role is to educate the advisee on a wide range of topics, including their chosen professional path, their long-term academic aspirations, the classes they will take on campus, and the process of making those choices (Flatley et al., 2013). NACADA (2021) asserts that the academic advisor is responsible for engaging in an interactive advisor/advisee relationship to help students become more cognizant and more satisfied in their academic pursuits. Further, NACADA (2020) states that an academic advisor guides an interactive relationship that enriches self-cognizant and satisfaction. Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) clarified how an academic advisor's expertise and caring behaviors are the

underlying characteristics that help build trust, influence student satisfaction, and create a successful educational experience.

Ilya Winham (2020) introduced the concept of “pre-dead” students, inspired by Cornel West’s idea that students go to college merely to learn how to die. Winham introduces the concepts of pre-dead students to argue that the “task of critical advising is to help students shift from a premature professional narrowness to a maturation of the soul” (p. 18). Pre-dead students who go to college for a better job are at risk of missing out on an education that allows them to explore the arts and humanities and grapple with the fundamental concerns of what it means to be a human. When it comes to helping pre-dead students transition from early professional narrowness to soul maturation, academic advisors play an important role.

Drake et al. (2013) also found that academic advisors use a variety of tactics in their work, and each approach has its own set of best practices. Walters and Seyedian (2016) similarly reported that advising strategies vary widely depending on the relationship between the academic advisor and the student. Ellis (2014) asserts that upon entering the first advising session, most college academic advisors will not know a student’s initial expectations; however, they must gain this understanding as they develop a relationship with each advisee.

Steele and White (2019) state that the professional academic advisor knows why students arrive, remain, and succeed in college. Through the study of student development theory and leadership education, the advisor’s role in higher education can be used to help students improve their leadership skills (Spratley, 2020). Menke et al.’s (2020) research reported that an advisor could identify students with difficulties and lead them to interventions that assist students in meeting their educational goals. The role of an academic advisor includes aiding students with goal setting, degree planning, and the investigation of possible majors and careers (Fratley et al.,

2013) but also includes a duty to assist students in making significant life decisions (Khalil & Williamson, 2014). Grites (2013) concludes that to maximize each student's educational experiences and to develop their present academic, personal, and career goals toward future success, effective academic advising must go beyond course registration and allow the academic advisor to take a holistic approach to each student.

Wenham et al. (2020) noted that academic advisors are frequently tasked with protecting the safety and well-being of students by counseling them on risk identification and mitigation. The opportunity for the academic advising profession to help students grow, dream, think, and engage should be at the core of what is done in postsecondary education (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012). When advising students, an advisor should include comprehensible curricular paths and suitable referrals that connect students to institutional resources, faculty, staff, and programs that improve their experiences and involve them in learning (Darling, 2015).

Crocker et al. (2014) emphasized that an advisor adept at developing relationships with their students is more likely to promote and assist in advising. Similarly, Alvarez and Towns (2016) indicated that in their interactions with students, an academic advisor typically assumes the position of an adult educator. Workman (2015) stated that an advisor could help unprepared students identify priorities and communicate why they value these qualities. This activity helps students reflect on their beliefs and ambitions, preparing them for their major and career search. An advisor's role is to assist students in defining and achieving their academic and professional goals by providing them with significant information (Powers & Wartalski, 2021). By default, the advisor often takes on the role of the organization's preservationist (Dunkel & Chrystal-Green, 2017). According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), the purpose of a preservationist is to preserve something of worth by keeping it alive, undamaged, or unspoiled. Often, advisors are

called upon to keep track of the organization's past and current status (Schuh et al., 2017).

Crookston (1972) states that students and their advisors have a similar relationship to a doctor and patient; the advisor is responsible for investigating the issue, diagnosing it, and offering a recommendation for the patient (student).

In summary, an academic advisor's importance is growing. Their favorable impact on student achievement boosts their numbers in academic services and student affairs departments at research universities, which is good (Self, 2013). Sheldon et al. (2015) noted that universities should consider what the advisor knows, whether the student has access to this knowledge, and how well the advisor mentors the student and helps them activate their internal resources.

Academic advisor richly impacts their students' success (Lynch & Lungrin, 2018). Working with an academic advisor can solve some of the most perplexing problems in higher education (Steele & White, 2019). Additionally, academic advisors have the potential to be powerful institutional agents that give vital support to college students (Museus, 2021).

Effective Academic Advising

Swecker et al. (2014) conducted research among students on academic advising at a 4-year, comprehensive research institution in the Southeast. The participant pool was 437 first-generation college who matriculated in Fall 2009; however, 74 students were eliminated for anomalies and univariate outliers for dichotomous variables. This quantitative study utilized multiple logistic regression to examine the link between academic advisor meetings and first-generation student retention at a large, public research institution in the Southeast. The number of advisor meetings (independent variable) predicted student retention, consistent with earlier research. The data was analyzed using SPSS 19.0 software. This study found that every academic advisor meeting increases a student's retention odds by 13 percent.

Nevertheless, when these spillover effects are not captured, the underestimation of the effectiveness of advising services takes place (Mu & Fosnacht, 2019). A successful academic advising strategy is to identify difficulties early on and refer students to the appropriate resources, always keeping in mind that each student has a unique situation (Argüello, 2020). Similarly, proactive advising aids in developing relationships, which is a crucial component of success and retention (Kalinowski Ohrt, 2016)—promoting trust, information, openness, and consideration through developing relationships and providing proactive advice (Argüello, 2021). Mosher (2017) stated that high-quality academic advising involves a strong relationship between the student and the advisor. López (2018) noted that advising influences students not only while finishing their degrees but well beyond completion. Because academic advising is educational, student and advisor interactions are fruitful learning experiences (Filson & Whittington, 2013; Steele & White, 2019). Braun and Zolfagharian (2016) found that academic advising and student satisfaction are linked, and understanding this relationship requires looking at what constitutes excellent advisement. Correspondingly, as educational institutions realized the importance of effective academic advisement, more jobs in this field were created (Grites & Gordon, 2009). The effectiveness of academic advising is often underestimated in the literature as students often share information gained from their advisor with other students (Swecker et al., 2014).

Knowing their students' names, backgrounds, talents, and shortcomings have allowed academic advisors to convey their emotions positively by ensuring the student understands that their success is the advisors' top priority (Folsom et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2015). As a result, it is not just about managing the organization's particular set of institutional and administrative issues but also delivering outstanding academic advising services to students (Karp & Stacey, 2013). Various advising strategies exist, each with its supporters. An academic advisor must adapt

numerous advising methodologies to their student demographics to serve increasingly complicated higher education institutions worldwide (Drake et al., 2013). Per Smith et al. (2019), a student's success depends on the quality of their academic advising. Therefore, understanding what makes good academic advising and having access to tools that help students evaluate the quality of advising are critical to students' success (Harrison, 2012).

Effective academic advising is also an excellent way for students to use a campus-wide network of academic support services that may help them get the most out of their college careers (Hurjui et al., 2020). An advisor can devise procedures and strategies for completing paperwork and following up on administrative responsibilities (Chrystal-Green, 2018). Ng et al. (2018) emphasized that choosing electives, reviewing study habits, and giving effective academic advising should be academic advisor specialties. Advising candidates effectively requires the advisor to maintain excellent professional relationships and provide relevant academic help (Hilliard, 2013). The effectiveness of advising depends on the connection between an advisor and students, and trust is a crucial component of good advising (McClellan, 2014). Additionally, taking the time to verify students' concerns and ensuring that the advisor fully gets their point of view and frame of reference (Ohrablo, 2018). Ohrablo (2018) noted that an advisor's ability to access and share information with students, staff members, and administrators must be fast and efficient. To make systems more effective and resourceful, they must be both efficient and understandable. Promoting critical and inquisitive thought reflective thinking is one of the most effective ways an advisor may enhance a student's experience to high impact (Chrystal, 2018). Students, teachers, staff, and the advising unit and institution are better protected when the primary role of an advisor (PRAs) in colleges and universities is transparent about unacceptable conduct or well-established norms (Wilson et al., 2020). Academic advising

has been recognized in student success literature as a fundamental aspect of a holistic plan to enhance student persistence, especially on college campuses (Fricker, 2015). Effective academic advising is one aspect that influences a successful result (Mosher, 2017). After all, while effective advising contributes to a student's academic performance, both the advisor and the student must grasp the process's objective (Zhang et al., 2019).

Barriers to Effective Academic Advising

According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), “barriers” are natural formations or structures that prevent or hinder movement or action. Anderson et al. (2014) affirmed that universities across the country face an ongoing struggle in maintaining vital undergraduate academic advising services that fulfill the needs of students.

Anderson et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between student expectations and student satisfaction with advising at a State University. Using Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT), researchers have studied how people behave after being lied to but the advisor-advisee interaction has not been studied using EVT as a theoretical framework. Anderson et al. found that though students' and advisors' expectations of the advising process may differ, there are some similarities. Advisors play an important role in prescriptive advising by helping students select and arrange courses. Students at the university were asked to participate in a focus group to discuss their poor experiences with advising. Their advisors harmed students in three major ways. Student expectations and advisor behaviors were examined in this study to see if there was a correlation. Cross-sectional quantitative research was conducted using survey methods. Four people decide not to participate, with women outnumbering men 75 to 36. 96 percent of participants were white or Caucasian, compared to 2 percent each for African Americans and Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders. These exams were created with

modifications to the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI; Winston & Sandor, 2002). To determine the participants' opinions of advisor behavior, 14 Likert-type items were used. The level of student satisfaction with their advisors was measured using four 7-point statements.

According to r, the developmental difference score was positively connected with student satisfaction with academic advice.618, p. (115). The study's conclusions show that not all students will benefit from a progressive approach to advising. The benefits of prescribing therapy have not been recognized (Anderson et al., 2014). Future research on this subject needs to cover more ground. Last but not least, it would be intriguing to learn which advisor actions are preferred by different generations of students. When students are happy with their academic advisors, they are more likely to stay loyal to a university (Anderson et al., 2014).

Dadgar et al. (2014) asserted that colleges, institutions, and states are experimenting with new approaches to promote student achievement in higher education, frequently characterized by limited resources and a small staff. On the other hand, academic advising is commonly misunderstood by higher education officials, who, despite their worries about student persistence, undervalue the work that an academic advisor performs (Menke et al., 2020). McGill (2019) recognized professional advising and identified five main obstacles to the establishment of the profession: further definition, the function of a professional association, compulsory education for the advising role, personal and occupational autonomy from other professional entities, and the lack of a stable home for advising. Academic advisors and researchers have struggled to define their field's scope: In higher education, "the field struggles to identify its particular position" (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Professionalizing academic advising has been complicated and delayed because of the close ties between NACADA and the field's interests (McGill, 2019). A benefit of the academic advising area that complicates professional

development is that practitioners come from many fields and professional backgrounds and hence have uneven advising histories and bases of practice (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). An academic advisor does not have complete autonomy because advising comes under various higher education institutions; they answer to upper-level officials at such institutions, not necessarily advising scholars or practitioners (McGill, 2019). The final barrier to professionalization is the lack of a uniform administrative home for academic advising across various campuses. Advising can fall under either academic affairs or student affairs, and on some campuses, advisors report to both administrative divisions (McGill, 2019).

Advisor Barriers

NACADA scholars assert that the job description for an academic advisor does not reflect a standard set of tasks and responsibilities (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). Engaging staff and faculty in identifying solutions to improve the integration of support services and instructional duties is a serious problem in higher education (Dadgar et al., 2014). One advisor voiced concern that stakeholders do not value advising's role in the academic mission (Dadgar et al., 2014). As a result, department heads, deans, and faculty members do not include an advisor in decision-making or policy-making (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015). McGill (2018) asserted that higher education officials frequently underestimate an academic advisor's job despite their concern for student persistence.

Lee et al. (2019) assert that an individual's emotional response to another person's vulnerability and suffering, coupled with a desire to help the person in need, is commonly referred to as *compassion*. Raimondi (2019) describes an academic advisor's ability to establish relationships with students based on empathy as the core of their work. In 1992, Joinson developed the term *compassion fatigue* (CF) to describe the burnout felt by nurses who, because

of their work, had lost their ability to feel compassion for their patients. According to Henson (2020), CF is characterized by a sudden onset of emotional and physical tiredness, apathy, powerlessness, and depersonalization. Crocker and Joss (2017) found that CF can apply to anyone in the helping profession, including many advisors who often experience burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Crocker and Joss go on to say that those groups working in helping professions, their coworkers, and their institutions can all be negatively impacted by CF.

Higher education professionals must cope with the emotional weariness that comes with catering to the emotional needs of students (Malone et al., 2018). When those professionals are no longer able to cope, the result is often burnout (Malone et al., 2018). Ali and Johns (2018) noted that an academic advisor can become emotionally, physically, and spiritually exhausted due to experiencing and absorbing students' difficulties. Many factors contribute to the burnout experienced by many academic advisors.

Back-to-back visits with students with limited time to prepare for each appointment are one example of chronic stress that academic advisors have to deal with (Cook, 2009; Ohrablo, 2019). Karp and Stacey (2013) found that large student-advisor caseloads prevent an advisor from spending enough time with students or initiating additional meetings. Another common barrier in academic advising arises when an advisor does not use their available resources but instead relies on their memories and other colleagues (Chrystal-Green, 2018). Anapol (2016) noted that the repercussions of high attrition rates include a demanding workload for the remaining academic advisors and an increased advisor-to-student ratio.

Academic Advisor Training and Development

Gordon (2019) found that one of the most substantial components of successful academic advising is having an academic advisor who is properly trained. While some apply intentionally

for advising positions due to a passion for helping students, others may be promoted through the system or be transferred into advising without choice (Ohrablo, 2019), resulting in Training strategies should consider that most new advisors enter the industry with little understanding of how to incorporate the intricacies of the culture of advising instinctively, institutionally, and into their practice (Mann, 2018). New advisors often lack formal training on rules, procedures, resources, and best practices and their lack of knowledge often goes unnoticed if they are never exposed to proper training (Ohrablo, 2019). Ohrablo (2019) emphasized that to help an advisor acquire informational, instructional, investigative, interpersonal, and integrative competencies while onboarding them, training programs should incorporate content and activities that will help them gain these skills. Ohrablo (2019) also stresses the importance of having new advisors commit to professional organizations and urges advisors to participate in professional development. Mann (2018) provides the following example: suppose we want an advisor to integrate well into the profession and advance toward the expert level of growth. In that case, we must include professional reasoning as an advising talent at every interim step of their training and development. According to Gordon (2019), an ongoing, well-conceived training program can give the continuity, and a broad base of knowledge, skills, and information necessary for successful advising. Therefore, training for academic advisor and their ongoing professional growth and development are becoming increasingly important because of the increased focus on the value of competent academic advising (McClellan, 2014).

McGill et al. (2020) explored the need for advisor training and development for effective practice. They assert that academic advisors require training and growth in three areas: conceptual (students and institutional context), informational (rules, policies, procedures), and relational (interpersonal skills). The purpose of McGill et al.'s sequential exploratory mixed

methods study was two-fold: first, their study investigated the relational component of academic advisor training and development in professional development program (PDP) learning opportunities and advisor PDP evaluation scores; second, the study sought to understand how academic advisors view the relationship component of advising and how it may impact their work as advisors.

During the first phase of McGill et al.'s (2020) mixed-methods study, researchers included fifty-seven full-time advisors whose primary role was assisting undergraduate students. These 57 advisors participated in the professional development program and interviews with researchers. Interviews last between 60 and 90 minutes and were recorded on two devices in the interviewer's office. The interviews were semi-structured, using the same interview protocol for each but allowing for the flow of conversation to dictate the order in which the questions were asked. Following the interviews, researchers transcribed the interviews and sent them to the participants to verify accuracy. Researchers then coded the transcripts using open coding.

McGill et al.'s (2020) study is significant because very little research existed about the relational component of advising professional development programs. Researchers discovered that these relational learning opportunities were the least prevalent of the three domains discussed and that they had no bearing on the advisor's assessment scores. They concluded that more emphasis should be placed on relational training and advisor assessment of relational competencies is crucial to professionalizing the industry. They further concluded that while some advisors admitted that they often had their approach and that some students would resonate more than others, the ability to develop that relationship is vital. Because advisors are often diverse in their academic and professional backgrounds, McGill et al. assert that the general idea is for

advisors to build a connection with the advisee in which they feel comfortable so that they can approach the advisor with any questions they may have.

Student Barriers

As students are accepted to a four-year university, they begin adjusting to the institution's pace and culture (Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013). These adjustments can be stressful and perplexing for students (Chin-Newman & Shaw, 2013; Dvorakova et al., 2019). Edmonds and Squires (2016) posit that few Americans debate whether or which students should be college-ready; it is now universally accepted that all students should be prepared for postsecondary education as these qualifications are essential for many occupations and career advancement. Despite the understanding that students attend college in preparation for future occupations, students often arrive at college with significant prior knowledge, including many misunderstandings that impede their ability to correctly learn new concepts (Tawde et al., 2017).

Dvorakova et al. (2019) state that when it comes to nurturing an understanding of oneself and meaningfully interacting with others who are in the same identity development phase, young people confront a double challenge. However, students confront various problems during this transition and an academic advisor has distinct roles as an academic resource, character model, and inspiration source (Mbindyo et al., 2021).

Gray et al. (2019) assert that the most difficult aspect of transitioning to university life is adjusting to being away from home, campus culture, and the different experiences of being a mature student. Consequently, students who have been warned or been placed on academic probation often do not meet with an academic advisor (Powers et al., 2014), often because they doubt themselves or experience fear and anxiety about the academic process. Anderson et al. (2014) indicated that colleges could not know what adjustments need to be made in the advising

process if students stop asking for advice and do not notify anyone that their expectations were not met. Advisors' inexperience may lead to an inadvertent violation of students' expectations which can lead to a negative experience with the advising process (Anderson et al., 2014). However, understanding students' expectations during advising are essential (Anderson et al., 2014). Inexperienced advisors can lead to students wasting time and money on unnecessary courses or missed deadlines. These types of stumbles can contribute to a sense that students do not belong in college (Karp & Stacey, 2013). Many college students may also feel overwhelmed by the wide variety of available academic majors and job paths (Walker et al., 2017). As a result, White (2015) asserts that it has been overlooked that some advisors have done a terrible job educating their students on their courses of study.

Summary of Academic Advising Literature

Chan et al. (2019) insisted that further research on the subject is beneficial and timely, given the possible value that good academic advising brings to students. However, academic advising and mentoring, which contribute significantly to students' academic and personal development, have not been thoroughly investigated (Suvedi et al., 2015). Also, Sweeker et al. (2014) asserted that reduced student attrition is one of the most important outcomes of providing students with adequate academic advising. However, there is still a lack of uniformity in the methods, structures, and practices of academic advising employed by institutions of higher learning (Himes & Schulenberg, 2016). As a result, the methodologies utilized to investigate the influence of academic advising on students, the context in which an advisor works, and the theoretical underpinnings of this intellectual interaction may vary (Troxel, 2018).

Learning outcome evaluations should be the core of the academic advising community's practice, and the entire higher education endeavor will benefit (Steele & White, 2019). Steele

and White (2019) emphasized that the future of higher education and the policies that could make a genuine difference in student success require the input of professionals working on the front lines. Several researchers have discovered a link between academic advising and student performance (Donaldson et al., 2016). According to Filson and Whittington (2013), an academic advisor's responsibilities have grown from their simple origins of course schedules to include a diverse range of tasks and expectations tailored to students' changing requirements who seek guidance in today's higher education contexts. To ensure that all students have a clear educational path to completion, they should participate in meaningful activities that will enhance their academic journey and prepare them for success in the future (Darling, 2015).

Anderson et al. (2014) highlighted that improving academic advising is essential for colleges and universities to find the "perfect mix" of services that lead to student satisfaction and retention. Overall, academic advising is integral to assisting students' academic progress and success on college campuses. There are several factors to consider while deciding on the best way to accomplish a given institution's objectives (Self, 2013). Due to the paucity of research on an advisor and advising, there is a pressing need to look beyond student satisfaction when studying advising (Zarges et al., 2018). Therefore, advisors hope to start a conversation about how an academic advisor's professional socialization may be improved so those future academic advisors will have a better experience (McGill et al., 2020). We must consult with an advisor to determine which tools they value the most and which ones remain unseen (Thomas & McFarlane, 2018). White (2013) recommends that every institution and university adopt a mission statement that focuses on the importance of academic advising. Faculty and administrators will also be challenged to improve the advising process and maximize returns on limited financial and people resources as political and economic pressures demand higher

retention rates, graduation rates, and greater fiscal accountability (Crocker et al., 2014).

Academic advising must thrive that the nature of the undertaking is constantly examined (White, 2015). Thomas and McFarlane (2018) insist that we must also ask an advisor about changes in institutional rules, practices, cultures, and behaviors that help students learn and accomplish faster. Instead of asking where students fail, we should inquire where our antiquated or inconsistent systems and institutions fail students. Hence, student achievement is enhanced by well-designed advising programs. Still, there has never been a way to identify the primary drivers of an effective advising process appropriate for every individual college (Walter & Seyedian, 2016). In the future, academic advising will play a more vital role in higher education (Grites, 1979).

Chapter III: Methodology

This study explored the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisors' perspective. Much of the existing research in advising had been from the student's perspective. Many studies included the need to explore advisor perceptions in their recommendations for future research. As a suggestion for future research, students' academic advisors can help colleges enhance academic advising by providing feedback and suggestions (Suvedi, Ghimire, Millenbah, & Shrestha, 2015). For future recommendations, Barnes and Parish (2017) cited that a student perspective is the focus of this study; however, it is essential to look into advisor perceptions as well as objective measures of academic success that may be linked to a proactive advisory procedure in future investigations. It was possible to research the university's academic advisors to ascertain how they respond to requests for feedback on the academic advising procedure to enhance the program (Junita, Kristine, Limijaya, & Widodo, 2020). Paul and Fitzpatrick (2015) discovered a correlation between student satisfaction, advisor knowledge, and approachability. They found that altruism and wisdom are the best predictors of student satisfaction with their advisor. This research study focused on academic advisors' perceptions of best practices in academic advising within an R1 institution within the USG. This study aimed to establish the most effective advising strategies for use in developing a best practices model of advising. According to Zarges (2018), there is a compelling need to investigate beyond student satisfaction, given the lack of literature on advisors/advising. Alvarao and Olson (2020) assert that even 40 years after the initial call for advising research, more research is still needed.

Chapter Three introduced and explained the research design, stated the research questions, and explained the participant recruitment and instrument development process. They will outline the data collection and data analysis processes used in this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

1. What do academic advisors consider the best academic advising practices?
2. What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to effective academic advising?

Research Design

The researcher conducted a qualitative case study to understand an academic advisor's perceptions of their role as an academic advisor. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights into the advisor's perceptions through interviews. According to Moser and Korstiens (2017), a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to obtain an in-depth understanding and perspective of the subject matter. A quantitative inquiry was not appropriate for this study because the researcher is interested in exploring the lived experiences of academic advisors. Quantitative research focuses on numbers and simplifying complex problems through statistical and correlational analysis.

Qualitative research involves the analysis of an extensive collection of data to find patterns; these patterns allow the investigation to construct a complex, multi-dimensional picture (Leung, 2015). According to Lucas et al. (2018), qualitative research involves studying phenomena through one lens or numerous theoretical frameworks. Approaching the research questions through a specific lens allows the researcher to obtain more detailed responses in their exploration such as the advisor's perspective (Lucas et al., 2018).

The case study approach to qualitative inquiry is one of the most widely used qualitative approaches (Yazan, 2015). According to Gilad (2021), case studies, which are historically or geographically bound events, organizational units, or persons, are among the most used qualitative approaches. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), case studies allow the researcher and the participants to learn more about their behaviors and practices. The case study approach was the best qualitative approach because of the tight boundaries placed on the participant group and the interest in exploring advisor experiences.

The researcher used this qualitative case study to investigate academic advisors' perspectives on effective advising practices and challenges in academic advising. Academic advisors participated in 60-minute, semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked 16 open-ended questions (Appendix A) to extract a narrative about their experiences with academic advising methods. The interview response revealed information about the academic advisor's personal experiences with providing academic advising, which allowed the researcher to begin to construct a best practice guide for academic advisors.

This study was conducted in a large metropolitan public research institution's advising office. As of the Fall semester of 2020, more than 36,000 undergraduate students were enrolled at the subject institution. The Carnegie (2022) classification for the subject institution was a four-year, full-time, selective institution with a high undergraduate enrollment profile. This study was limited to academic advisors for undergraduate majors (e.g., students with 0-89.99 earned credit hours). Students are assigned *senior advisors* in their respective colleges after they have earned 90 credit hours. The subject university had a centralized advising center that houses advisors for all students with less than 90 earned credit hours. The researcher decided to employ University Advising Center advisors because they would all work in the same environment and with

students from the same area and classification. Each college had its rules, which is where the senior advisors are based.

Role of the Researcher

The primary researcher in this study was employed by the subject university and was located in the central advising office from where the participants will be selected. The researcher participated in the research study by collecting, processing, and analyzing the data. The researcher compiled the findings, draw conclusions, and make recommendations for future studies.

The researcher had over 15 years of academic advising experience, including four years at the subject institution. The researcher examined what other academic advisors think about successful academic advising and what obstacles they have encountered in their work. Because the researcher is currently employed by the subject institution and serves as an advisor there, she would not recruit advisors from her immediate advising team to avoid any appearance of bias or conflict of interest.

Participants

This research study recruited participants from the centralized advising office at one USG R1 institution in the Southeast. The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before participating in selection or recruitment. According to Creswell (2014), a heterogeneous group comprises about 10-15 people. The researcher recruited 12 participants for this study, but 9 participants were included in the study researcher to reach saturation. The most widely used concept for evaluating sample sizes in qualitative research is data saturation (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017; Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). The researchers have

reached "saturation," or the point at which they have collected all the necessary data without adding anything new to the database (Md, 2021).

To be eligible, participants must currently be employed by a Research 1 university within the University System of Georgia in the downtown area of Atlanta, Georgia. Advisors selected for this study must have at least two years of undergraduate advising experience and can be either male or female. Interviews with a selection of advisors who have engaged with students over a more extended time will serve as the foundation of the research. These interviews aimed to glean information from people who have completed more meetings with the students they advise and have spent more time with them. Only one thing unites the various tasks and obligations of advising: a student's dedication to the process (Aiken-Wisniewski et al., 2015).

Recruitment

Once IRB approval (Appendix B) was granted, the researcher sent a recruitment email (Appendix C). to eligible advisors at the subject institution. The email will be sent to the Assistant Director of the advising office. The researcher will seek assistance from the assistant director in identifying academic advisors with two or more years of undergraduate advising experience. The researcher will request a response from Assistant Director within a week. After the Assistant Director has selected the potential participants, the researcher will contact them via email to get their permission to participate. To start the process, the researcher asked if they could connect within a week with an acceptance or denial of participation. When participants agreed to take part, the researcher sent the copied and pasted the email sent to them by the Assistant Director and sent it out. The informed consent form (Appendix D) will be emailed to participants who agree. After receiving the form, the researcher set up a meeting via Zoom. Due to the advisors' availability, the researchers selected to use Zoom to help with any potential time

constraints. As soon as the documents are returned, the appointments were made to start the interviews. In two weeks, the researcher completed the interview procedure.

Each participant received a \$10 Amazon gift card as an incentive. Kaba and Beran (2014) insisted that financial incentives can be effective but do not always persuade everyone to participate in a study. Because participation in this study is voluntary, the researcher chooses to provide an incentive to those who follow through with completing the interview.

The researcher emailed each participant a copy of the informed consent before the interview process. Once the participant has signed the informed consent, the interview will take place via Zoom- an online video conferencing tool.

Instrumentation

Interviews were scheduled for approximately 1 hour, with at least 30 minutes between each interview to allow for additional notetaking. The researcher used Dr. Stacy Soden's existing survey instrument with permission (Appendix E) and themes from the existing literature on academic advising to develop a semi-structured interview protocol with 16 open-ended questions. The researcher chose to conduct interviews because, according to Mahama and Khalifa (2017), interviews are more than just a way to get information; they are conversational practices in which the researcher tried to understand the world of the interviewees and the meaning they attach to their experiences. The researcher chose the semi-structured interview style because semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to express themselves freely and will allow the researcher to probe for more information as the interview progresses. Additionally, open-ended questions stimulated more active participation and are better at testing knowledge, making the questions more accurate and valid (Baburahan et al., 2021). All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Dr. Stacy Soden (2017) developed a survey instrument entitled *Perceptions of Academic Advising and Student Retention* (Appendix E). The researcher modified the questions on Soden's instrument to best answer the research questions for this study.

An interview protocol for private discussion between the researcher and the academic advisors served as Dr. Soden's tool. The advisor's judgments of what actions were strategically crucial in helping a student pursue a successful academic career path were the exclusive focus of these interview questions. The interview protocol also asked about the obstacles in academic counseling that could prevent a student from succeeding in a chosen vocational route. Every interview question created to be open-ended, allowing participants to discuss their goals, responses, and reflections on the subjects of student advice tactics and advisement-contradictory obstacles (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

Her research question related to academic advisors' perception was Research question 1: What are the academic advisors' perceptions of effective academic advising strategies for undergraduate, pre-allied health student success and retention? According to the interviewees, effective academic advisement included helping students with professional and personal goals. Academic advisors said successful students have a relationship with an advisor who can assist them in negotiating college's social and academic regulations (Soden, 2017). Her research sought to understand how academic advisors and students perceived effective advising techniques (Soden, 2017). My study aimed to learn about advisor perspectives and ideal procedures. The instrument needed to be expanded with new questions to address my research questions. A panel of experts reviewed the reliability and validity of the five new questions introduced to the instrument.

Data Collection

After signing the informed consent, each interviewee participated in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately one hour. Interviews took place via Zoom. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for future data analysis.

During each interview, the researcher followed an interview protocol (Appendix F) that consisted of 16 open-ended research questions. These questions were developed from an existing instrument and modified to include elements found in the current literature. The open-ended questions allowed participants to speak openly and freely about their knowledge and experience in academic advising. The semi-structured protocol enabled the researcher to ask questions as needed to obtain clarification or additional detail.

Each interview question was developed to answer the study's researcher's questions. Participants were allowed enough time and freedom to discuss their academic advising experiences openly. Questions also allowed for an open dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Based on the role of the researcher as an academic advisor, participants were able to speak comfortably about their craft within a semi-structured interview.

Following each interview, the researcher spent approximately 30 minutes making additional notes about the interview. The researcher will then transcribe each interview using the transcription tool in Zoom and provide a copy of the transcript to each participant for member checking. After the interview is over, the participant received a thank you email (Appendix G) and a copy of the interview transcript via email. A participant had five days to submit the final transcript via email to the researcher. Member checking, also known as respondent or participant validation, solicits feedback from one's participants or stakeholders about one's data or interpretations (Motulsky, 2021). First, provide the participant with the interview transcript to

review, correct, delete, modify, or add to, usually in writing. This stage verifies the accuracy of the transcription or interview and the data collection process (Motulsky, 2021). The second justification for transcript review is that the researcher wants to share power and involve participants by allowing them to rectify errors, validate their original remarks, or add their own amended thoughts or interpretations to the transcript (Iivari, 2018).

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, the researcher went through a series of steps to analyze the data called Data Analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015). According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), data analysis occurs at every phase of qualitative inquiry. They emphasize the importance of knowing what you want to study before your study begins. Before each interview, the researcher reviewed the interview protocol as a reminder of the context of the study. Because the researcher is considered one of the research instruments in qualitative inquiry, data analysis will occur during the data collection phase. During the interview, the researcher made notes, asked probing questions, and coded the participant's name to ensure confidentiality.

After each interview, the researcher reserved approximately 30 minutes to make additional notes and comments about the interview, the participant, or the overall process. These notes are included in the data collection for the study as they represented the researcher's immediate analysis of the interview data. Additionally, the researcher transcribed each interview using the transcription tool Zoom. Once all interviews were transcribed, the researcher used open coding to analyze each transcript. Transcripts were manually coded for the study. This process was open coding; the researcher scanned the data for a priori codes (those codes that are expected based on the prior researcher (Creswell, 2013). This process is considered open coding and is the first step in analyzing interview data.

Once the open coding is complete, the researcher analyzed the data again, but this time will group similar codes or themes. This type of coding is known as axial coding, and it helped the researcher identify broader themes within the data (Williams & Moser, 2019). Open and axial coding was used to answer the research questions for this study. Table 1 outlined the alignment of the research questions, data collection tool, and data analysis method.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Alignment

Problem Statement: There is a gap in the literature about best practices and consistency within academic advising.		
Purpose Statement: This study will explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective.		
Research Questions	Data Collection Tool	Item on the Data Collection Tool
RQ1: What do academic advisors consider to be the best academic advising practices?	Semi-structured interviews	Interview Questions 1,2,3,4,6,9,10,12,13,15,16
RQ2: What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to effective academic advising?	Semi-structured interviews	Interview Questions 4,5,7,8,11,14,15

NVivo is a computer program that helps researchers organize, analyze, and visualize qualitative data and documents systematically and individually (Dhakal, 2022). The accuracy of NVIVO was utilized to verify the manual coding. Being a more effective researcher is made possible by NVivo, which offered a structured and organized method of analysis. It has been proposed that employing NVivo or another computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software further enhance the quality of the analysis (Røddeśnes, Faber, & Jensen 2019). The emergent themes discovered during data collection are gradually integrated into each stage of the coding process, which also continuously improves the themes to produce theory development and meaning creation (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Reliability and Validity

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers use the principles of reliability (consistency and dependability) and validity (truthfulness) sparingly because of the terms' close tie to quantitative measures. Reliability in a qualitative study often referred to the similarity in which multiple coders analyze the data (Creswell, 2014). One way to achieve reliability within qualitative research was through intercoder agreement. The intercoder agreement measures how closely two or more coders have adhered to a predetermined coding scheme when applying the same codes to the same text segments (Mihas, 2019). Another way to achieve reliability is through the creation of a codebook. Codebooks are research artifacts that illustrate which topics are pertinent to a given research question. (Mihas, 2019). Due to the precise nature of the qualitative data, codebooks are crucial before, during, and after qualitative coding (Hughes, 2016).

Establishing validity within qualitative inquiry often required the use of multiple sources of data collection (Newman, 2003). The validity, or the accuracy of the research data, was achieved in various ways. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative validity can be achieved through prolonged and persistent observation, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, and using thick, rich descriptions. For this study, the researcher will engage in prolonged engagement, refining researcher bias, member checking, and thick, rich description.

Trustworthiness

Though the validity and reliability of the term are sometimes used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013), trustworthiness is a more practical and accurate term for this type of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Just like quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been done precisely, consistently, and exhaustively by

recording, systematizing, and revealing the analysis techniques with sufficient information to allow the reader to judge whether the process is credible Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria were added to improve the idea of trustworthiness and to match the traditional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability (see Figure 7). For readers to have faith in a study's conclusions, researchers must demonstrate trustworthiness and rigor in the study's data collection and analysis phases (Connelly, 2016).

Figure 7

Basic Trustworthiness Criteria

Criteria	Technique	Technique used for this study
Credibility	Peer briefing, member checks, journaling	Member checks, journaling
Transferability	Thick-rich description, journaling	Thick-rich description, journaling
Dependability	Inquiry audit with audit trail	N/A
Confirmability	Triangulation, journaling	Journaling

Note: Lincoln & Guba, 1985

A study's credibility, or trust in the validity of the research and its results, is the most crucial factor to consider (Polit & Beck, 2014). Cope (2014) posited that credibility is enhanced when the researcher can describe their experiences as a researcher and verify the research findings with the participants. In this study, the researcher disclosed her role and confirmed possible researcher bias with the participants. The researcher will also allow participants to verify that the written transcript of the interview matches what they intended to say during the interview. This process is called member checking or participant or respondent validation (Birt et al., 2016). The researcher requested participant feedback through member checking within five days of providing the completed transcripts. Member checking, or participant feedback, has

become so widely and consistently recommended as a validity or trustworthiness check that it almost seems to have become a requirement for rigorous qualitative research (Motulsky, 2021).

Another factor in the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is the transferability or the degree to which the findings benefit people in different settings (Polit & Beck, 2014). An investigation is considered transferable when readers can decide how relevant the results are to their conditions (Polit & Beck, 2014). Cope (2014) states that researchers should offer their audience enough background information on the participants and the research context to assess the findings' applicability to their setting. It is possible to do this by keeping a journal and detailed records – either digital or handwritten – for the reader's benefit (Amankwaa, 2016). In this study, the researcher will allow at least 30 minutes between interviews to take additional notes and make other observations that may aid in the study's transferability.

Dependability in qualitative research means that the data have stayed the same over time and under the conditions of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Connelly (2016) describes dependability as similar to the concept of reliability but with a deeper grasp of how study design affects the stability of the circumstances. Strategies to enhance dependability include process log audit trails and peer debriefings.

Finally, confirmability is the degree to which discoveries can be replicated and are consistent (Connelly, 2016). The researcher can demonstrate their capacity to confirm their findings by explaining how they arrived at and were derived directly from the data (Cope, 2014). This criterion must be met for the results to be considered valid, which means that they must reflect not only the researcher's biases, objectives, or perspectives but also the voices of the participants and the context of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Attending to the language of trustworthiness contributes to the thoroughness and quality of the study outcome (Amankwaa, 2016), which, in turn, equates to the reliability and validity more common in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the researcher designs the study to include such elements as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, they demonstrate trustworthiness and rigor in data collection and analysis (Connelly, 2016).

Summary

Chapter III provided the research method design, including the qualitative research design and case study approach. In addition, this chapter reviewed the problem's background, the study's significance, and the research questions. Chapter III also discussed the role of the researcher, participant recruitment and selection, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter IV will outline the study's results regarding the research questions and discuss the findings.

Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter reviews the study's goals and research questions and summarizes the procedures used to select and recruit study participants. This study was designed to discover optimal best advising practices from the academic advisors' perception. The purposive sampling method was used to choose participants with a wide range of experiences (Fraenkel et al., 2016). The researcher began by providing a list of participants, their profile information, and a brief background on each of the advisors and how they came to be in the academic advising field. After conducting interviews, discussed the results regarding the characteristics and barriers of academic advising. The researcher concluded by offering a summary of my findings.

Participants

After receiving IRB approval, I began recruiting individuals for this study by emailing the Assistant Director of Academic Advising requesting assistance in recruiting possible subjects who meet the requirements. Academic Advisors II and Academic Advisors III were selected as academic advisor participants for this study. These advisors were chosen because of their extensive academic advising backgrounds and ability to contribute to the study's overall quality. This qualitative study included interviews with nine academic advisors who agreed to participate out of the 12 that were invited to participate in the study, with a response rate of 69%. Three of the advisors did not follow up with me. One determined that she could not devote an hour to the interview. I asked all participants the same 16 questions during the semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the study was to examine, from the advisor's perspective, the behaviors and characteristics of the most effective academic advising approaches.

Participant Profiles

Every academic advisor has more than two years of experience in academic advising. The academic advisor participants have a combined total of 62.5 years of expertise, with each academic advisor having an average of 6.94 years of experience. Only one man and eight women agreed to be interviewed for this study. Of the nine people interviewed, six held advanced degrees (i.e., graduate degrees), and three had an undergraduate degree. Five of the nine participants were ranked Academic Advisor II, and four were ranked Academic Advisor III. None of the nine interviewees met the 270:1 student-to-advisor ratio advocated by NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. All academic advisors have a total of 3,389 students under their care. Each academic advisor has an average of 365 advisees for the Fall semester. Table 2 contains a description of the research participants' characteristics.

Table 2

Profile of Interview Participants*

Participant Name	Job Title	Experience	Degree	Case Load
Bobby	Advisor III	10 years	Master of Business Management	320
Sally	Advisor III	9 years	Master in Marriage and Family Therapy	360
Jennifer	Advisor III	8 years	Bachelor of Science in Psychology	341
Cali	Advisor II	7 years	Bachelor of Arts in Psychology	370
Melissa	Advisor II	7 years	Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology	383
Gail	Advisor II	4 years	Master of Science in Social Work with a concentration in family and children's services	445
Angela	Advisor II	8 years	Bachelor of Science in Sociology	400
Cherrelle	Advisor II	7 years	Master in Adult Learning and Training	385
Cyrena	Advisor III	2.5 years	Master of Arts in Educational Psychology/School Counseling	285

*Participant names are pseudonym

Bobby. Bobby has been an advisor for the past decade. He got his start in the field after spending several years in the admissions department of a private university and was eager to do more than enroll students in school; he also wanted to shape their experiences there and pave the way toward graduation. As a result, he shifted his focus to academic advising. He hoped that his instruction would have a constructive influence on the students. This characteristic is the primary motivation for his long career in academic advising.

Sally. Sally worked as a professor's advisor for nine years. Thomasville, Georgia, is her hometown. She had to find a place to do her practicum for her Master's degree in marriage and family therapy counseling. Two cities in Georgia, Valdosta, and Atlanta, were on the table for her consideration. Having decided to finish her degree in Atlanta, she uprooted her life and headed north. She needed a steady income when she first arrived in Atlanta in 2013, so she applied to the local community college. She decided to stay with the school even after it merged with a four-year university. She started as an Academic Advisor, but when the university instituted hierarchies for academic advisors, she quickly rose through the ranks and is currently Academic Advisor III.

Jennifer. For eight years, Jennifer has worked as an academic advisor and has helped countless students succeed. Since 2008, she has been a full-time employee at a university and aimed to broaden her enrollment management expertise by working in several departments. She began working in the field as an admissions officer at a for-profit college. The Admissions office handled both the application process and academic advisement. Although this was an excellent first step, she hoped to do even more to help the students. Since she found academic advising to be the most rewarding part of her position, she decided to focus entirely on it moving forward.

At some point in her career, she hopes to advance to the Registrar's office. She has no interest in working in Financial Aid.

Cali. Cali's academic advising career spans seven years. Cali got a job at the Registrar's Office of a state-funded, state-wide institution in Georgia. In total, she spent seven years in this job. Following the birth of her baby, Cali took some time off from work; upon her return, she sought a position in academic advising. So, she decided to apply for an advising job at the university she had previously left. She was in this role for 1.5 years. Since she felt it was time for a change, she sought out and obtained a position as an academic advisor at a different university; she has been working there for the past 4.5 years.

Melissa. The University of North Carolina in Wilmington is where Melissa started her job as an academic advisor seven years ago. She has experience in the field of mental health before academic advising. Since she comes from a family of educators, she has never desired to work in education. Her children were small, and working in mental health was highly demanding and time-consuming. Because of this, her youngest child had to spend most of the day at childcare. She was unable to get her daughter involved in after-school activities. Her spouse is a retired Marine, and she comes from a military family. She failed to obtain a full-time job after they transferred duty stations, but she could get a part-time job in the school system. She spent more time with her kids and let her daughter participate in after-school activities because of this part-time job. She was happy to land a job in academic advising in her current; she wanted to work with more with adult students.

Gail. Gail is an accomplished academic advisor who began her career four years ago at a technical college in the Atlanta area and is now working at a Georgia Research 1 school in a major city. She started her career as a career counselor for the now-defunct Atlanta Job Corps in

2006 and moved on to become an academic advisor in 2017. She experienced an identity crisis as she tried to discover her place in the world when the organization closed. The Job Corps was neither high school nor university. Given her history, she reasoned that a technical university would be a good fit. In 2018, she was appointed an academic advisor at the technical university and immediately fell in love with her job. After working as an academic advisor there for a while, she decided to go elsewhere. Specifically, she praised the university of Georgia Research 1's educational advising program.

Angela. While working as a track and field coach at the university level, Angela began providing students with informal academic advising. On the other hand, she has eight years of experience working in an official capacity as an academic advisor. This Georgia university, categorized as a Research 1 institution, was where she began her academic career.

Cherrelle. Cherrelle is an experienced academic advisor, having worked in the field for seven years. She worked in human resources for corporations and recruited students for colleges. She hoped that all students would be afforded the same opportunity, but she did not see that happening. As a result, she increased the number of internships that she participated in in Atlanta. She was still not seeing any results in recruiting students, so she entered the classroom and assisted. She began a teaching career but soon realized she wanted to accomplish more. She believed that advising would be an excellent area. This journey was her expedition leading up to her entering the world of advising.

Cyrena. Cyrena began her career as an advisor at the University of Connecticut (UCON) for one and a half years. However, because of her history, she opted to attempt K-12 therapy. However, her family relocated to Georgia shortly after that. She opted to return to higher education because finding employment in her industry was difficult. She was hired at the

institution where she applied for a position. She is enthusiastic about advising again and adores her new role.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Each participant was interviewed for approximately an hour in a semi-structured format after signing an informed consent form, depending on the situation and the participant's preferences, and via Zoom. Zoom and Descript recorded and transcribed the recordings to analyze the data collected from the interviews. The researcher asked each participant 16 open-ended questions as part of an interview methodology (Appendix A). A preexisting instrument served as the basis for these questions, which were updated to reflect developments in the relevant literature. Participants could share their thoughts and experiences in academic advising without feeling confined by any predetermined answers, thanks to the use of open-ended questions. The researcher had the freedom to ask as many or as few questions as necessary to get the information needed from the semi-structured protocol. In-depth discussions with the study's researcher led to the formulation of a comprehensive set of interview questions. All participants were given ample time to discuss their personal academic advising experiences. The use of questions also created a two-way conversation between the researcher and the participants. Participants felt comfortable discussing their work in a semi-structured interview because of the researcher's role as an academic advisor. The researcher spent roughly 30 minutes after each interview jotting down supplementary notes. After each interview, the researcher used the transcription feature in Zoom to transcribe the audio and send the transcript to the participants for quality assurance. Validating one's data or interpretations with one's participants or stakeholders is called "member checking" or "respondent validation" (Motulsky, 2021). First, the interviewee was given a copy of the transcript in writing so they could edit it as they saw fit. The interview or transcription and the data collection process were checked for correctness (Motulsky, 2021). The second reason for having participants check transcripts was that the researcher wanted to give them some agency and make them feel more invested in the process by allowing them to fix mistakes, verify their statements, and add their own revised thoughts and interpretations (Iivari, 2018).

Data Analysis is the procedure the researcher follows to examine and interpret the collected information by the researcher to explore and analyze the collected information to answer the research questions (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It is argued by Bernard and Ryan (2010) that data analysis is a continuous part of qualitative research. They stress the significance of having a clear study goal before beginning academic work. The researcher referred to the interview protocol before conducting each interview to refresh their memory about the study's overall purpose. Data analysis occurs during data collecting in qualitative inquiry since the researcher is one of the research tools. The researcher took notes, asked in-depth questions, and protected anonymity by encoding the participant's identity during the interview.

There were about 30 minutes allocated for the researcher to reflect on the interview, the participant, and the whole process after each interview. Given that they contained the researcher's in-the-moment analysis of the interview data, these notes were incorporated into the study's data collection. The researcher used the online transcription service Zoom to transcribe each interview. Once all interviews were transcribed, the researcher analyzed them using open coding. To complete the research, transcripts were coded by hand, and NVIVO was used as a verification tool. The researcher used open coding and located a priori codes (those codes that are expected based on the prior researcher (Creswell, 2013). After the researcher finished open coding, she re-examined the data, this time classifying the codes categories based on shared themes. Axial coding is a method of categorizing information that aids in the discovery of overarching themes in the data (Williams & Moser, 2019). The study's research questions were answered via open and axial coding.

Findings

This study collected data from interviewing nine academic advisors working in a University System of Georgia research institution. An email was sent to the Assistant Director of the Advising Center requesting assistance recruiting academic advisors with extensive experience in academic advising. Nine academic advisors participated in semi-structured

interviews lasting approximately 60 minutes each. Data collected from the interviews were then used to compile a narrative case study exploring academic advisor perspectives and give us a thorough insight into their experiences. Hunter and White (2004) asserted that "a well-designed academic advising program is one of the few institutional efforts that may ensure students have consistent contact with a supportive adult over the course of their college career" (p.21). The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions:

1. What do academic advisors consider the best academic advising practices?
2. What do academic advisors as barriers to effective academic advising?

Research Question 1

The first research question asks, *"What do academic advisors consider the best academic advising practices?"* Participants proposed strategies for effective academic advising were generally consistent with one another. Several supplementary or alternate responses were provided based on the amount of data each interviewee was willing to share. Direct quotations from interviewees serve as supporting evidence for the findings. The following are the interview questions used to collect data for Research Question 1 from the Academic Advisors.

Interview Question #1. *How many years of experience do you have as an academic advisor?* Seven of the advisors have more than seven years of expertise in the field. Seven years of experience have been accumulated by Cali, Melissa, and Cherrelle. Jennifer and Angela have eight years of expertise in the advising area. Sally has eight years, while Bobby has the most with ten years. Gail has four years of experience, whereas Cyrena has two and a half.

Interview Question #2. *What is your highest educational achievement?* All academic advisors were well-educated professionals. In any case, most of them held advanced degrees. Master's degrees in diverse fields are held by Bobby, Melissa, Gail, Cherrelle, and Cyrena.

Currently, Sally is a doctoral student. Angela is pursuing a master's and doctoral degree in higher education administration. Within the framework of the master's degree, she will complete 12 hours of doctoral-level coursework. Jennifer and Cali have completed all four years of study required for a degree in Psychology.

Interview Question # 3. *How did you come to be in the position you are in now?* All the academic advisors seem to enjoy their roles as academic advisors. They have entered the profession from many different backgrounds. After working for a college track & field coach, Angela decided to pursue advising. Her previous role was not "a direct correlation of advising." Jennifer wanted to "experience all facets of enrollment management." She worked in Admissions before, and "her next logical step" would be to move into a role in academic advising. Since Gail has always had a passion for assisting people, she chose "to try academic advising" after the Atlanta Job Corps disbanded as an organization. Bobby began academic advising ten years ago. He spent several years in Admissions at a private university before "shifting his focus to academic advising." Sally is a licensed therapist as well as an academic advisor. She implemented her techniques as a therapist to the role of an academic advisor and "quickly rose through the ranks when career ladders were executed for professional advisors." Cali's academic advising career spans over four years. She said, "It was time for a change" as she transitioned from the Registrar's Office into academic advising. Melissa was elated to become an academic advisor and highlighted, "I was happy to land a job in academic advising and work with adults." Her previous role was in a middle school. The world of academic advising is not a task that Cherrelle takes lightly. She asserted, "Wanting to accomplish more" in student success.

Interview Question #4. *What do you like most about advising students?* Most of the advisors felt very fortunate to be in their current roles and to be able to help students. Bobby

wanted "impact students in a positive light." His most joyful moment as an academic advisor is when the "light bulb comes on for students," and they gain clarity. Additionally, Sally said, "students get the glassy eyes but later return to you and say I get what you mean now." This is a proud moment for her. Gail noted that she "loves being able to motivate students and let them know that they got this and can do this when they are having a bad semester." Jennifer was impressed with being able to "assist students with their dreams of earning a college degree." Cali loved helping students "discover which major or pathway is best for them when they have no idea which degree or career they would like to pursue." Angela and Cherrelle enjoyed assisting students with reaching their goals. Angela noted, "being a part of their success and kind of just seeing them grow and accomplish all of the goals they set for themselves" is her favorite part of advising students. Cherrelle mentioned that:

Everybody has goals and trying to help them reach and attain their goals, whether it's reaching graduation or I was able to get this internship, or I was able to launch myself into a career. I like to hear those results.

Cyrena revealed that:

I love connecting with students, just the surface level; what classes should you register for? Because of my background, I can dig deeper with students and tie their studies with their career goals.

Interview Question #6. *What are your advising philosophies, and how do you use these when advising students in preparing them for an undergraduate program?* When giving advice, however, one can draw from a wide variety of theoretical frameworks. NACADA promotes the use of developmental advising. Cyrena agreed that holistic/development is the best approach.

Cyrena cited that:

Like a holistic view, I'm just doing the check-in from a social, emotional lens: career and academic plan. And we end with ensuring that the students have what they need next steps to prepare for classes, jobs, or anything else they may discuss or disclose with me.

Melissa claimed she had used appreciative and developmental methods in her previous workplace. She has started "prioritizing the appreciative approach to make the most of her time during sessions." According to Cali, "the appreciative approach is effective and efficient in advising students." So, this is the approach she prefers to use. Cherrelle shared the same appreciation for appreciative advising. She cited, "I enjoy using appreciative advising. I think we must help the student feel comfortable to talk to us". Angela takes an intrusive approach and "wishes to be more involved in the student's life." Bobby is more involved with students understanding of courses. Therefore, he stated, "my advising philosophy is basically to try to get the student to understand intense and non-intense courses and having a good mixture" for the student's course schedules. Having the student be aware of the realities of the scenario is essential. Sally is the trusted advisor who would reveal this information. She has been deemed the non-warm and fuzzy advisor due to her "giving it to the students straight, no chaser." There is a Socratic quality to her approach. On the other hand, Gail's approach is "the most important thing is me giving the student all the information you need, but more so empowering that student." The significance of the courses must be communicated to the students. Jennifer would do well with students that need a little bit more support. She declared that:

So that is my crucial thing for them first if you know your end goal or some part of your end goal. Recognize it because that's how you determine how to get there and let me help you figure out how.

Interview Question #9. *How do you define student success, and how does the institution define it?* There are many different methods to define student success. The individual decides what this entails. However, most academic advisors concluded that graduation is the basis for student success, and they appear to believe that the institution shares this opinion. Bobby said, " I promptly define student success by matriculating through their curriculums. I feel the institution does the same thing because they do checkpoints regarding students' progress, satisfactory, academic progress, things of that nature." Sally said, "I define student success when a student graduates, and the institution defines student success as reaching every success marker that they should for their pathway and major graduating in a certain timeframe. Graduation, Cali agreed, is a symbol of achievement, but she emphasized, "the success of a student to me is finding the right degree for the student to make sure they're just not choosing one to get out of college." Gail added, "the ultimate goal for the UAC is graduation, and I feel like communication is how I define success. Angela reiterated that:

I would say in the institution. Our primary goal in student success is getting the students to graduate. So, I would say that that goal was going to kind of focus more so on getting into college, getting through college, and then graduating.

Cherrelle stated:

I think holistically when we look at student success, it's not just academically. I think it's even though we want them, of course, to make good grades, we want them to benefit all the way around. Are they getting opportunities to talk about internships and career progression? Are they having any challenges psychologically or emotionally? How are they doing?

However, Cherrelle cited, "for institutions, the biggest thing is, are we graduating them? That is important." In addition, it emphasized that success can be earned at different levels. Jennifer shared that student success "means that students are checking off boxes on the success marker." For example, a student may be on an academic improvement plan, but when the student is in good academic standing again, that is considered student success. It is a place of growth for them. Melissa had a similar thought "if a student struggled with Math and got a C, but the student worked hard, that is a success." Cyrena viewed academic success from a different perspective. She cited, "I think from a qualitative view retaining students, have we been able to retain my students, or I'm looking at my population, I would love to see the students doing well in their classes." According to Cyrena, "How many students are graduating and are progressing in their major" is the main goal for institutional success."

Interview Question #10. *Tell me what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success as an academic advisor.* The respondents to this question offered various approaches to success in academic advisement. However, Angela, Bobby, Cyrena, Gail, Melissa, and Sally agreed that connecting with the student is essential for promoting student success. Angela asserted that:

The student needs to know that you have their best interest at heart. An open and honest relationship allows the student to open up to you and to build that rapport so that if that student needs something serious or not so severe, they trust you to come to you to get that information from you.

Bobby cited, "just being personable and being an individual, when you have that first interaction with that student, that they understand that you are the subject matter expert and the things that you're saying." Gail mentioned, "make sure that you're showing love because

when you show love, it opens up the opportunity for the student to trust you and really be able to receive that feedback that you have to give them". An efficient method of advising, as Melissa pointed out, "getting to know your students, their goals, and how you can help them reach their goals and be successful." Sally agreed with Melissa and shared that "building rapport with students" and "being genuine" is an effective strategy to assist students. Consequently, the students will feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. Cyrena included,

the appreciative approach must be used as an advising philosophy for effective advising to take place and the framework from an advisor lens; it really just ties in the idea of good customer service with students bridging those connections with students."

Jennifer added, "You must communicate and over-communicate with them, and unfortunately, you must get used to repeating yourself in different ways, but it's okay because they must learn it. They must hear it. So, I think repetition is key". Cali is confident that involvement is an efficient strategy to boost student success. She mentioned the following: Involvement, just making sure the student is like I said, I expect them to learn how to read their Degree Works and take ownership of their degree, but also just getting as involved as possible, not just doing what they are told, but taking steps to understand why and getting involved with the college.

However, Cherrelle voiced that "strong outreach" is necessary for effective academic advisement.

Interview Question # 12. *Do you feel your role as an academic advisor is to help students in areas outside of academics, such as a student's personal life?* All academic advisors agreed that it is part of their job to support students in areas other than academics, such as their personal lives. Because I chose to employ the developmental theory as the study's theoretical

framework, this question was crucial. Gail pointed out the importance of students seeking assistance for their concerns, saying:

Yes, absolutely. Because the goal is to help that student create that balance because, especially when you're talking to first-year students or especially when you're talking to first-time college students or generational, first-time college students, you only know what you see on TV. It's like back in the day when people say, well, I went to college because of A Different World; they know what they saw on TV.

Melissa stated, "she thinks students' personal life affects them academically"; therefore, we must be involved in sharing the resources offered through the school. Jennifer shared that "one of her students struggled with finances," and she shared some job availability to help her remain enrolled. Therefore, her response is an absolute yes. Cali stated:

Yes, we could be involved, but there must be boundaries. I have had several students over the years come and talk; I obviously cannot give professional advice but be able to be trusted enough to be someone they have at the school.

Cyrena and Sally all believe that supporting students in this area is vital, but they also recognize the limitations and boundaries that come with it. Cyrena asserted that "there are limitations, and we have to respect them and know when it's appropriate to refer a student." Sally reinforced, "I have to have a line of demarcation."

Regarding students' open communication, Melissa made the following remarks:

I would say no because that's not our role, but if a student brings those issues to us, we should know the resources offered through the school to help those students. So I do believe that in that aspect, yes.

Cherrelle and Bobby concurred with Melissa that it was outside the scope of their employment, but Cherrelle added, "So I'm going to try to help the students as much as I can; it's not my job, but I'm a human being. You're a human being, and I need to help them".

Bobby emphasized, "I do not see that as my main function," but "I do see myself doing that often."

Interview Question #13. *Do you feel an academic advisor and student relationship within a college institution can impact a student's desire to stay enrolled in a degree program?*

Academic advisors generally agree that the rapport between advisor and student can influence the likelihood that a student will complete their degree. Cherrelle indicated, "many students come looking for her or other advisors because they felt they were the parents at the university." Students wish to know what she thinks of specific situations or need advice on what they should do. Cali inserted, "that anybody rooting for a person, in general, will make them want to continue their path." In agreement, Bobby said, "an individual who is supportive, who is giving you nothing, but great encouragement, and it gives them something to want to come back for."

Gail stated that she thinks the advisor and student relationship is influential because she feels like the advisor is the backbone to getting students through college. Angela emphasized, "the relationship is essential and that the sessions must be authentic so they know they can trust you." They know that if something happens within parameters, you have their backs to help them to be successful students. Jennifer stressed that her advisor's influence on her decision to continue enrolling was significant and that her influence on her ultimately drove her to pursue a career in advising, "my advisor was wholeheartedly student-focused," which led to a beautiful experience for her. To help her students even more, Sally encourages them to stop by whenever they need her, "if you don't know any place else to go, please come to me." As with Sally,

Cyrena emphasized, "students can feel discouraged not to want to continue if advisors are not showing attentiveness and empathy."

Interview Question #14. *Do you feel the administration supports your needs as an academic advisor at your institution? Do you consider this a barrier or a strategy in your academic advising duties?* Most agreed that the administration supported them and that this support benefited them in their capacity as academic advisors. Cherrelle and Jennifer asserted, "Assistant Directors and Directors are very supportive." Bobby acknowledged, "my Director supported my ventures and encouraged me to put together different projects that could help students." Gail proclaimed, "100%, I think they support my needs". She loved that her Assistant Director or Director would stop by her office to check on her to see how she was doing. This attitude made a big difference. Angela asserted I would say the administrative in my current role support my team and me". Cali and Melissa noted, "Yes, I do feel like I am supported." Cyrena asserted, "I do feel like our administration and leadership staff create a great system for advisement." In contrast, Sally shared, I think that the administration and upper administration are slightly out of touch with advisors, we are the boots on the ground."

Interview Question #15. *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the structure and approach used for academic advising at your institution?* A few academic advisors believed that the design and strategy utilized for academic advising at their institution were appropriate. Angela, Cali, and Gail, three of the nine academic advisors at their institution, all felt that the structure and approach used for academic advising at their institution was appropriate. Angela cited, "so at my current institution, we have the national model. For student success, including the advising model that we use, I would say it can be practiced and very efficient across the board". Cali emphasized, "I agree greatly. There are not many rules as to what I have to talk

about, which I have been a part of that model as well, and I can create a rapport and conduct the appointments as I wish". Gail asserted the following:

I agree. I like our approach because you want to communicate with your students constantly. You always want to be talking to your students, whether it's through an appointment, whether it's just through email, or saying, Hey, I checked your schedule, and your plan looks fine for the semester, have a great semester".

Interview Question #16. *In your opinion, how could academic advising at your school be improved, both in terms of the process and the outcomes expected of students?*

The participants made many different suggestions for changes. There were, however, a few recurring recommendations for enhancement. Melissa and Cyrena said, "more advisors are required to manage the influx of students." To spend more time with each student, advising sessions might benefit from having fewer people in them. Cherrelle is fond of "true advising, "meaning that the numbers must be lower to "focus on our students." Angela added, "I think the institution can find creative ways to retain these staff members to ensure that this is less of a barrier for the students." This idea would also assist with advisor needs. To ensure the success of both the advisor and the student, it is essential to increase the number of advisors and to provide ongoing training for current advisors. Since new advisors come from various academic and professional disciplines, Gail and Melissa recognized "the importance of training." Bobby insisted, "I think if we have more engaging events, more engaging opportunities with the students." Jennifer would like "the academic departments to become more involved" and "on the same page as advisors." In addition, Sally stated that academic advising would look different for different campuses.

Research Question 2

The second research question asks, "What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to academic advising?" Communication difficulties arise when trying to discuss obstacles. Some supplementary or alternate responses depended on how forthcoming each interviewee was. Direct quotations from participants in the study are used to back up the findings. The following are the interview questions used to collect data for Research Question 2 from Academic Advisors.

Interview Question #4. *What do you like least about advising students?* The academic advisors agreed that helping students is the best part of their work. But there are some aspects of students suggesting that they dislike it. Melissa stated that her least favorite thing is not related to the process or students, but the pay is what she likes least about the role. Bobby noted, "what I do not like about academic advising is that it is sometimes not always as consistent as it needs to be, showing the students some consistency." Cali said, "probably this newest generation of students that feel like they don't need help and are entitled a little bit. There's about 30% of my population that just doesn't care to have any help besides what they want". According to Sally, "this may be due to the parental involvement at this stage in their child's life, which she does not like" However, Jennifer believed, "student needs an additional push and a little grace." Cyrena is not pleased with the omission of clinical or mental health. She cited, "what I like least about it is that it's not a common practice for everyone to dig that deep with students because not everyone has that, like clinical or mental health." Melissa revealed, "I would say that the pay is what I like least about it." Angela wants to build a relationship with students outside of the office and mentioned the following:

I cannot make those personal relationships outside of the office. So for me, I'm a very intrusive type of advisor. I must remember. My job is my job. My personal life is my personal life. I often want to play mom or big sister, if you will. Because I'm not that old to these students, I also have to understand that there are barriers, lines that we don't cross, and that type of thing.

However, Gail and Cherrelle noted, "I can't think of anything I do not like about advisement. I enjoy/love what I do".

Interview Question #5. *Approximately how many student advisees do you have?*

The number of students on the advisee lists of the study participants varied. However, 400 students were supported by Angela. Cherrelle spoke with and offered advice to 385 students. Gail had 445 students under her guidance, which was the most. Because of the increased number of transition students in our population. Angela noted that the caseload fluctuates regularly and can increase or decrease when new students are admitted to the university. Cherrelle claimed that because she also works with the State Farm tuition program, she sometimes has more students than others, but due to the program's decreased enrollment, she has 385 advisees. With nine total participants, these individuals have the largest population of students assigned to them. Bobby, Cyrena, and Jennifer have the least at 285, 320, and 341. Cali, with the number 370, and Sally, with the number 360, represent the medians. These caseloads substantially surpass the ratio of advisors to advisees advised by NACADA.

Interview Question #7. *Do you feel like you understand course requirements, both for courses in General Education requirements and within your specific programs?* There was complete assurance among the advisors that they knew everything there was to know about the General Education requirements. Bobby, Jennifer, Melissa, and Sally noted, "Yes." Cali and Gail

cited, "Yes, for core, and it is hard to learn all specific programs since the institution is large and has many majors." Cali added, "So I took the time to run the, what if the population on the academic planner and the degree work to show the student what was to come."

Angela emphasized, "I could probably do it in my sleep. It's so repetitive". While, Cyrena communicated, "there are classes I don't know too much about. I definitely would love to learn more about it. I find that students ask us, like, what are those classes about?".

Cherrelle concurred with Cyrena. And stated, "I'm not as well versed in those, but I am open to learning more. That's why I appreciate that. We have our meetings where we talk about the different disciplines.

Interview Question #8. *What do you consider an advising barrier in your current role as an academic advisor?* The academic advisors discussed their challenges in their respective roles Both Cali, and Cyrena faced the same challenge brought on by a lack of academic departmental relationships. Cali stressed "lack of access to knowledge in the actual departments and no departmental representative at New Student Orientations (NSOs) to make departmental decisions." Cyrena asserted, "Not knowing the course details fully. When they ask those specific questions, I would say just more, department connections with the advisement office". Cherrelle would like to see holds placed on students' accounts and cited, "It would be great to put holds out there on students' accounts to encourage them to come in for advisement strongly." Bobby noted, "the lack of training of the students on technology. So, we have all this awesome technology. However, the students aren't trained on it". Sally emphasized "that we need to do a bit better job onboarding student, especially in the fall where we have the most students that come in. It's very rushed". Therefore, the students do not receive enough information. Jennifer noted that the most significant obstacle is the student's adherence to the policy:

We have a policy set in place. And I'm a colossal policy person when it comes to it. Because if it's in the catalog and a policy in place, that covers you. Still, we are living in, I guess, a generation where students feel very entitled, and they say I am going to tell the President, or I'm going to go and complain to whoever's going to listen.

Angela noted, "a barrier we face quite often is that we don't work with these students through degree completion." Melissa voiced, "a lot of the administrative work that needs to be done and a lot of the time constraints the amount of time that we get to spend with students. So, it's more regimented." Because Gail is a recent addition to the team, Gail noted, "I started at XXX June 1st. So, it's been a couple of months now, and I have not run across any barriers because the communication is great."

Interview Question #11. *Describe an advising session, if applicable, where you felt the meeting with a student was unsuccessful.* These meetings with students typically don't end well for several reasons. An essential element is that the advisors can recognize when the session is not going well and try to make it a pleasant experience. All the academic advisors, except one of the nine, stated that they had experienced a few unsuccessful meetings with students. Angela said, "The unsuccessful advising sessions, in my opinion, will be those students who are in a position where they may be on probation. Have one more time to get that 2.3 GPA to not fall to exclusion". When students are excluded, they are permanently removed from the institution. Bobby made the following comments:

I typically would have an unsuccessful meeting if they came to me, and I guess the real reason was not in my department. I want to be the person to see it from start to finish. However, if I am handing it off to a different department based on my capabilities, it makes me feel like I didn't do all I could if it didn't get resolved if that makes sense.

Melissa acknowledged the following:

I worked with education students; they often struggled because of their GPA or were unable to move into their internship because of their GPA. We had to discuss alternatives because they couldn't complete that degree without those requirements.

In addition, Jennifer cited, "Oh, I have a lot and not because of what I did not do, but some students are so that you have students who are just not in that mindset" and "they do not want to hear what I am saying." A few words from Cali:

I had a couple where a student was unwilling to open up to new possibilities. If the current case they're in another current major, they're in, isn't working out for them. Being open to plan B, plan C, plan D. So that often a complicated conversation and sometimes it's welcomed and sometimes absolutely not.

As Cyrena pointed out:

I had a student disclose some sensitive information that warranted the idea of completing an emergency withdrawal. So, I provided the student with the details on completing the emergency withdrawal and an SAP appeal for financial aid because the student struggled to find the funds to finish school in the fall.

Additionally, Sally mentioned:

So, one, I have had a student I think has since moved on or gone someplace else. He was a young man who, in my opinion, after the first conversation I had with him, should not be; he should not have been in school. Okay. Especially online, he should have tried to come to the classroom if possible. He had failed all his courses from the previous semester".

Finally, Cherelle expressed that:

Well, I can think about one student I and several on our team have tried to work with, a veteran student. Still, I believe it is due to other challenges the student may have had.

Why the student may not feel that he was not being successful here at XXX because it's not only our unit; he has a problem with the faculty; it's the military support.

In contrast to the others, Gail emphasized, "So the blessing is I've not come across unsuccessful advising session because, for me, I determine if it's success based on how the communication went."

Interview Question #15. *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the structure and approach used for academic advising at your institution?* Many of the academic advisors at the university voiced their disagreement with the design and approach utilized for academic advising. Cyrena shared, "I do not like the walk-in appointment model." She thinks it is difficult and tiring for advisors. Additionally, during busier periods, providing students with predetermined office hours and having many Advisors of the Day (AOD) could be helpful in this regard. In addition, Sally emphasized, "predictive analytics is an issue because they are all about the numbers" and "it begins to feel a little like a robotic automation." Jennifer testified, "So academic advisement it's offered every day, throughout. We have a lot, and we communicate to the students early registration is approaching. Several students wait until the very last minute". Cherrelle stressed, "the advisement holds are good. It is more student-initiated. But I think that from the advisor role as well, those holds need to be in place". Melissa expressed, "I feel that there's probably more administrative. The Registrar's Office would traditionally do the work that we do here. So I think that does affect the time that we have to be able to spend with students advising". Finally, Bobby indicated, "And I disagree with the approach of getting individuals.

Because I've been in that process before, as far as the hiring academic advisors" and "sometimes the approach is more of not looking at the full picture."

Analysis of Findings

Data gathered during this study were analyzed using hand coding and NVIVO as a verification tool. The analysis resulted in four common themes in meaningful academic advising experiences. Two themes were identified in the data collected for research question one (e.g., what academic advisors consider to be effective academic advising strategies), and one theme was determined from the data collected for research question two (e.g., barriers that academic advisors face in their roles). The themes related to effective academic advising strategies include Interpersonal Relationships and Progression to Graduation. The theme related to barriers to academic advising has challenges.

Interpersonal Relationships

The first theme identified in the data was Interpersonal Relationships. Interpersonal relationships can be defined as constant exchanges where one party works to meet the other's demands. The participants in this study were asked to identify what they considered effective advising strategies and how they defined student success to encourage student achievement. The participants consistently stated that interpersonal ties are crucial to effective academic advising. Strayhorn (2015) found that the best academic advisors view higher education as a culture and see the significance of building relationships with their students throughout the educational process. Participant responses support this supposition: Cali noted, "I do think that relationship does affect the student even affect their academics." Gail mentioned, "I think it's important that you have a good relationship because I believe we are your number one cheerleader." Bobby asserted, "they will come and see me based on conversations that we may have had in passing;

they will come even if they are not in your population based on the connection." In addition, Angela added, "So I think the relationship that you build with these students is significant." Natasha mentioned, "it's important that students know I'm going to be here with you until you no longer need me." Cherrelle stated, "we do need to have relationships with our students, especially the ones that need a bit more help." Cyrena asserted, "Building a trusting relationship, providing good customer service and care, being empathetic work with students. Feel more connected or encouraged to pursue their program and even graduate with us".

The interpersonal relationships theme is made up of three subthemes that were present within the data: communication, relatedness, and rapport.

Communication. One of the subthemes within interpersonal relationships is communication. Participants reported that contact with advisees was of the utmost importance in an advising relationship. Respondents emphasized regular communication's significance as a vital component of academic advising. Obaje and Jeawon (2021) posit that the advisor serves as a communication facilitator, a coordinator of learning experiences through the course and career planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other university agencies. Academic advisors interviewed for this study support this notion: Jennifer emphasized, "You have to communicate with them. You have to over-communicate, and unfortunately, you have to get used to repeating yourself in different ways, but it's okay because they have to learn it. They have to hear it". Cali also noted, "I love that discovery conversation when you see the light come on in their head."

Gail is proud to say:

But it's just that goal of ensuring that you're constantly in communication with your student because if you're constantly in touch with them, they know that you care, and they know they have somebody they can speak with.

Cyrena stated, "Be sure to reach out to all students and communicate effectively."

Relatedness. A second subtheme within the overarching interpersonal relationship theme is that of relatability. In academic advising, relatability is critical for the students to have faith in their advisors and feel comfortable being open with them (McClellan, 2014). Developing a connection with students and providing them with a solid basis upon which academic advisors and students can construct their work is essential to a successful advising relationship. Academic advisors constantly search for new and innovative ways to deepen their connections with the students they counsel.

Jennifer stated that to prevent students from going down a rabbit hole. She inserted, "I think the best way is just to be a listening ear and be relatable to them. I share a lot with my students".

Bobby mentioned, "just being personable, being an individual when you have that first interaction with that student, that they understand who you are and that you know the subject matter expert." Sally stated that:

Just be transparent with students by having those difficult conversations; if you do not know the answer to a question, research together to locate the solution, and do not try to pull the wool over these students' eyes or tell them something for the sake of saying something, being authentic is the best option.

Rapport. The third subtheme within the interpersonal relationship theme is rapport. Rapport is a connection marked by agreement, understanding, or empathy that facilitates or eases

communication. There was a consensus among interviewees that building rapport with their students was crucial to their success as an advisor. The advising sessions will continue to be integral to the student's academic life, and there is no mandatory advising hold placed on student accounts at this subject institution. Students need to develop a strong rapport and positive associations with their advisors to be more likely to seek those advising experiences when needed. Troxel et al. (2021) assert that effective academic advising entails building student relationships, which takes time and effort. Melissa said, "interaction with the students getting to meet them, develop that rapport, learn more about their goals what they want to achieve and be able to help them kind of set and achieve those goals" (Transcript, p. 2. line 16). Melissa can forge that connection "by getting to know your students, getting to know and understand their needs, their academic style of learning, and any barriers they have to educate that will affect their learning." According to Gail,

They just knew how to talk to students in a crisis, learn how to be empathetic to students, and know how to communicate with them. Like I talked about, showing that love and knowing how to communicate so that they can receive that information and walk away feeling like their voice was heard versus feeling judged and that their advisor doesn't like them.

Gail also mentioned that she chooses to display *LUV* by *Listening, Understanding, and Validating*. This technique helps to build those connections with students. Cherrelle walks the students back to her office and asks them questions, establishing a more personal relationship with them. "How's it going?" rather than simply sitting down and discussing courses. She stated, "We want to know how our students are doing overall, not just about classes." In addition, Angela explained that:

I think the student needs to know that you have their best interest at heart, whatever that may be, whatever they're coming in for, that you're there to assist them as a student in need. I think as long as you have an open and honest relationship, then that allows the student to open up to you and for you to kind of build that rapport so that if that student needs something severe or not so serious, they do trust you to come to you to then get that information from you.

Cyrena noted that outstanding customer service is "bridging those connections with students through active listening, empathy, and reflective." Sally claimed that because of her experience as a counselor, she could appreciate the value of getting to know each student and "building rapport with them" one of the methods she employs is to be "genuine" with her students.

Progression to Graduation

RPG, which stands for retention, progression, and graduation, is the metric schools prioritize the most when measuring their students' success. The advisors agreed that making it to graduation is the most accurate measure of success. Students' accomplishment in completing their degrees and graduating indicates their level of achievement. The research highlighted the necessity of providing students with high-quality advising, which has been shown to directly connect to student success metrics (Wallace & Wallace, 2016). The data from the participants provide credence to this theory. Bobby insisted, "So I wanted to mold individual students a little more than just enrolling them and helping them follow through on their goals and potential graduation." Sally emphasized, "So, yes, we want everybody to graduate promptly. I always tell my students it's much better to graduate well than to graduate quickly". Melissa said, "Be that cheerleader on the sidelines, helping them matriculate through the program." Gail understood,

'the ultimate goal is graduating." Angela agreed with Gail, "I know our main goal within student success is to get the students to graduate." Cherrelle insisted, "It's important that we graduate them because we are looked at for that." Cyrena proclaimed, "student success is measured by how many students are progressing-retention, progression, and graduation."

Challenges

Challenges are situations or endeavors that put someone's abilities to the test (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Effective advising facilitation is challenging to achieve (Mosher, 2017). The advisor acknowledged that serving in the capacity of academic advisor was not without its share of challenges. If these obstacles are not resolved, they can potentially impede the students' achievement. Challenges in academic advising hinder the student's holistic development, as NACADA and Burn Crookston's Development Advising Theory recommended. Confronting adversity and finding solutions to overcome it are two essential components of developing one's resilience.

Lack of Resources. According to Merriam-Webster (2022), a source of supply or assistance can be referred to as a resource. The availability of resources is an essential component of every position. It will be difficult for individuals to accomplish the goal that has been established if they do not have the appropriate supplies. This difficulty is also true for the requirements that academic advisors at different universities need to fulfill the aim or vision of their respective institutions. The paucity of resources might vary from advisor to advisor, depending on the situation. This deficiency of resources presents barriers to academic advising, which has direct implications for Research Question 2: *What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to academic advising?*

Caseloads are too high for advisors to meet the needs of students effectively. According to Cuseo (2003), "Keeping the number of advisees per advisor low enough for effective one-on-one guidance." Advisors have voiced their desire to increase the number of academic advisors to spend more time with students. The advisor, as well as the students, will benefit from a reduction of this number. The students will have a better advising experience, and the advisors will alleviate some of the tension caused by more significant numbers. Because of this lack, advisors may develop compassion fatigue and be less effective. Participant answers corroborate this theory. Angela mentioned,

So, one issue we have within our academic department is staff turnover. We go through. Quite a few advisors, yearly. I think the institution can find creative ways to retain these staff members to ensure that this is less of a barrier for the students. This departure forces remaining academic advisors to take on additional students even though they are already over the recommended maximum set by NACADA.

Melissa chimed in with, "I think more advisors are needed to handle the large population of students." Cyrena insisted, "it would be easier to have smaller populations."

The process of organizing the various components of a complicated body or activity in such a way as to make it possible for them to cooperate reasonably with one another (Merriam-Webster, 2022). The lack of coordination between departments is causing inefficiencies in the delivery of services and support. Advisors frequently cite connections inside departments as one of the obstacles they face. A link to the department would make it simpler for the advisors to communicate the requirements they have for the students. In addition, this makes it easier for the advisor to appreciate the essential particulars of a department's needs. However, professors must include advisors in curriculum talks so that professors are aware of the implications (Smith,

Broman, Rucker, Sende, & Banner, 2019). Which topics are discussed in each of these classes? Institutional discouragement of cooperation between departmental initiatives and student support units is a frequent structural challenge (Rasmussen & Carlson, 2011). The participants were allowed to voice their opinions regarding the lack of departmental coordination. Cali stated: "The barrier is a lack of access to knowledge within the actual departments. I worked at another institution in the USG and got along well and had departmental support."

Bobby emphasized, "I would have an unsuccessful meeting if I had to hand the student off to a department due to my capabilities, and it makes me feel like I did not do all I could." Cyrena is driven by a great desire to build relationships with the professionals in the other departments and "departmental contacts that I can reach out to specifically and ask a quick question."

Moreover, it was argued that problems with advisors' services were caused by a lack of training and professional growth opportunities (Mikluscak, 2010). Unfortunately, not all advisors have the right skills from needed training to reach what seem like unachievable goals, as advisors are increasingly held responsible for student persistence and graduation rates by students, administrators, and the campus community (Wallace & Wallace, 2016). The responses of the participants support this theory. Bobby inserted, "there must be different pieces of training to stay on top of the different requirements due to things changing rapidly." According to Cyrena, "more staff training would be nice and outside of the institution that they work for, just being able to go to NACADA event for more knowledge."

Summary

To standardize the procedure, I interviewed nine different persons using the same questions and wording throughout the whole thing. The purpose of the questions was to

ascertain, on the one hand, the variables that contribute to good academic advising and, on the other, the obstacles that stand in the way of successful academic advice. All nine persons who participated in the study were academic advisors with a minimum of two years of professional experience. The participants were enthusiastic about participating in the study and voiced their confidence that my investigation would benefit from the information gleaned through their interviews.

Chapter V: Conclusions

This research aimed to discover what academic advisors think will work best when advising students. Using Crookston's theory (1972) as a framework, this qualitative research offered insight into successful academic advising methods. The themes included interpersonal relationships, progression to graduation, and challenges. Effective academic advising can also have the long-term effect of developing strong and enduring relationships between students and universities by building a sense of security and caring for students (Kim & Feldman, 2011).

Summary of the Study

This qualitative study investigates the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective. A Research 1 university in urban Georgia was used for this study. The researcher sought to answer the following research questions via interviews with nine participants:

1. What do academic advisors consider the best academic advising practices?
2. What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to effective academic advising?

This case study was conducted to understand better what constitutes optimal academic advising practices from an academic advisor's perspective. Chapter 1 introduced the research of academic advising, including the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, theoretical framework, methodology overview, delimitations and limitations, the definition of terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 began with the theoretical framework. The literature explored the history of academic advising, NACADA, the role of advisors, effective academic advising, challenges to academic advising, and academic advisement and student success. The methodology for this study was given in Chapter 3, along with the researcher's role, a description of the research design, details on participants' selection,

data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity. In Chapter 4, I introduced the profiles of the study's participants, my notes and reflections during the research, and the results that directly addressed the research questions. Lastly, Chapter 5 introduces the summary of the study, an analysis of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications of the study, and dissemination of the findings. The conclusion of this study provides an of the best practices for effective academic advising presented by this case study of qualitative research.

Analysis of the Findings

The findings presented in this study offered an expanded awareness of effective academic advising procedures from the viewpoints of academic advisors at an R1 university with the USG. In this study's Chapters I and II, a developmental theoretical framework was utilized to support the literature that was provided to highlight the need for future research on this issue. This study was carried out to investigate the necessity of further research on this topic. Academic advisors' perceptions of successful advisement techniques that impact a student's achievement in higher education were considered in the research questions. Vianden and Barlow (2015) academic advising is enhanced and graduation and retention rates are raised when an advisor develops strong interpersonal relationships with their students characterized by trust, shared commitment, and student happiness.

Research question one. The first question guiding this study was: *What do academic advisors consider the best academic advising practices?* The first research question focused on effective advising practices. A clear understanding of what constitutes adequate or positive advising is essential for successful academic advising. Educational advising approaches that promote students' growth and development and help them achieve and surpass their goals are

more likely to be developed by institutions willing to make the necessary financial investments to match their commitments (Lawson, 2018). The foundation of effective advising, as demonstrated through interviews with academic advisors, included the role of the academic advisor to support students in achieving both their educational and personal goals, provided that the individual goals are related to the success of the academic goals.

Academic advisors emphasized the value of communicating with students. People communicate too much, and it is usual to hear advisors repeat themselves. It is appropriate given that the students need to acquire knowledge. Academic advisors must constantly and critically focus on improving their communication skills. Advisors help students with a wide range of tasks, including browsing course schedules, developing professional goals, and navigating personal concerns, all while adhering to institutional guidelines and fulfilling course requirements (Case & Case, 2007). A best practice is undoubtedly having good communication with students. According to Obaje and Jeawon (2021), the role of the advisor is multifaceted, including that of a communicator, coordinator of learning experiences via course and career planning, evaluator of academic achievement, and referent to other university departments.

Additionally, advisors believed that effective advising entailed several factors, including building rapport with a student and understanding the student's background, needs, academic inclinations, and learning hurdles. Himes (2014) found that developmental advising often requires an open dialogue to help students and an advisor learn and grow together as an advisor to get to know and understand each student. Advisors emphasized that students must actively participate in their advising process and college experience. Developmentally focused advising seeks to provide an environment where students and an advisor may work together to achieve common goals and help students grow as individuals (Crookston, 1972). Students must learn

how to read their degree works, take responsibility for their degree by taking the necessary measures to comprehend it, and engage in the educational journey). Additionally, academic advisors have the potential to be powerful institutional agents that give vital support to college students (Museus, 2021).

Schools place a premium on RPG, an acronym for retention, progression, and graduation, as a means of gauging student achievement. It was decided by the advisors that graduating is the best indicator of success. To what extent students succeed in their academic endeavors can be gauged by their success in completing their degrees and earning diplomas. The importance of providing students with high-quality advice, which has been linked to student success measures, was underscored by the study's findings. Furthermore, a student's graduation is accelerated when they are supplied with the best advisement available, which leads to less time wasted and a quicker road to graduation (Crocker et al., 2015). According to Strayhorn (2015), students will have a better chance of succeeding in college if they have access to quality advising. In addition, Caruth (2018) argues that having easy access to quality advising in higher education is crucial to a student's performance in the academic realm.

Research question two. *The second question guiding this study was: What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to academic advising?* The majority of academic advisors reported feeling underequipped to do their jobs effectively. Another common barrier in academic advising arises when an advisor does not use their available resources but instead relies on their memories and other colleagues (Chrystal-Green, 2018). Nutt (2008) described advisors as cultural guides that help students find their way on campus, link them with campus resources, and ensure academic and personal success.

Advisors' caseloads are too large for them to satisfy their students' needs adequately. Higher education professionals must cope with the emotional weariness that comes with catering to the emotional needs of students (Malone et al., 2018). More time is needed for developmental advising. Anapol (2016) noted that the repercussions of high attrition rates include a demanding workload for the remaining academic advisors and an increased advisor-to-student ratio.

Inefficiencies in service and support delivery can be traced back to a lack of cooperation between departments. One of the problems that advisors often have is a lack of contacts inside their own departments. The advisors' ability to convey the department's expectations to the students would be facilitated by a direct connection to the department. In addition, this facilitates the advisor's understanding of the finer points of a given division's requirements. Gordon (2019) stated that due to the decentralized nature of advising, establishing a unified philosophy and method of practice is challenging. Academic advisors acknowledged that their relationship with the academic department is a challenge they face in their role (Hart-Bridge, 2020).

Academic advisors worried that new advisors were not getting enough training in advising fundamentals or ongoing education to stay current in the field. Gordon (2019) revealed that having a highly trained academic advisor is one of the most important elements of successful academic advising. Others might be forced into advising by system promotions or transfers, while other students who are passionate about aiding students actively seek out advising roles. The purpose of developmental advising is to encourage and assist students in utilizing college resources to achieve their educational and personal goals (Grites, 2013). Higher education institutions can better understand the requirements of advisors in order to provide appropriate resources that eventually improve the student experience by adopting measures that assess advisors' well-being (McGill, 2019).

In this investigation, the researcher employed Crookston's (1972) Crookston's Developmental Advising. All participants identified their advising experiences as crucial to securing their graduation and understanding that the advisor's office is a secure place for referrals to other school services when discussing how they affected their sense of connection. Academic advice has been shown to significantly improve students' chances of graduating. The findings lend credence to Crookston's theory that students whose social networks are strong are more likely to achieve academic success (1972). The findings from this study's interviews will contribute significantly to the field of academic advising.

Academic advising is supported in this study not as a model where students rely heavily on an advisor/advisee relationship to create a sense of connectedness, but rather as a model where a student's academic advisor is one point of support and connection who can also help them integrate into academic life by linking them to other supports like career advising, student life, and faculty mentorship. The findings of this study corroborate those of Crookston, who discovered that students wanted advisors who were both accessible and educated, and who helped them feel confident in their ability to make their own decisions on academic planning (1972).

Limitations of the Study

The study's limitations are the objectives that were not met during this study. Due to the high academic advisor turnover at the study's institution, only a small fraction of advisors met the minimum requirement of two years of service. Given this stipulation, the researcher could not interview the recently hired academic advisors. Another limitation of the study is the smaller sample size, nine individuals from the urban Research 1 institution in Georgia. Qualitative

research tends to limit the sample size to focus on the interactions' quality and the findings' significance.

Another limitation was the need to ask inquiries regarding administration and support. Even though confidentiality was explained in the consent form, some participants may have felt uncomfortable being candid during the interview. The researcher requested candor from the participants regarding their experiences as academic advisors.

The responses may be limited if participants are only at one university because of the academic advising procedure. With one institution's utilization, there is no comparison or contrast.

Compared to other ranks, such as comprehensive regional universities, state universities, or state colleges in the University System of Georgia, the student population at a Research 1 institution is different. Thus, necessitating a unique academic advising experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future study is recommended in effective academic advisement practices to assist student success. Using more than one institution is the most important recommendation for future research. The institution used is a Research 1 institution that could have more resources available and cater to a different type of student. There is a need to broaden the scope of future studies to incorporate public and private institutions inside and outside of the state of Georgia. Research like this might be repeated using a phenomenological approach to learn more about the lives and careers of academic advisors as well as hear about advisees' perspectives on the advising process and how it's impacted their academic progress.

Implications of the Study

The study discovered that the academic advisors' perceptions of effective academic advising concentrated on three themes: interpersonal relationships, progression to graduation,

and challenges. The designated institution and others could investigate viable solutions to the issues through advisor training, retaining staff, hiring more advisors, and encouraging relationships/collaboration with departments. If these concerns were addressed, the academic advisors might feel more accomplished in their roles and experience less stress.

Dissemination of the Findings

The study's findings may also be of interest to the membership of NACADA. NACADA hosts an annual meeting each October, and Southeast Region 4 (Alabama, Caribbean, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Island) hosts an annual meeting in March. The researcher intends to submit a proposal for a presentation that will focus on the results of this investigation. The researcher plans to fulfill the publishing requirements of the doctoral program by submitting the dissertation for publication to ProQuest and Columbus State University ePress.

Conclusion

Academic advisors worry not only about whether or not students will be able to complete their degrees but also about the factors that influence student retention and how academic advising could contribute to efforts to enhance this measure. This study can contribute to the ongoing national conversations over the most successful techniques of advising students, thereby allowing the viewpoints of those advisors to be heard.

In the end, academic advising is an essential part of institutions' learning and teaching missions, and these institutions give students aid that is collaborative and integrated (Troxel, Bridgen, Hutt & Sullivan-Vance, 2021). During this time in history, when higher education faces challenges on several fronts, including financially and philosophically, providing students with sound advice is more important than ever.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Academic Advisors Interview Questions

Academic Advisors' Interview Questions

Introduction (Read Aloud):

The topic for this study will be to discuss effective academic advising strategies that promote student success and barriers to effective academic advising.

1. How many years of experience do you have as an academic advisor?
2. What is your highest educational achievement?
3. How did you come to be in the position you are in now?
4. What do you like most about advising students? What do you like least about advising students?
5. Approximately how many student advisees do you have?
6. What are your advising philosophies, and how do you use these when advising students in preparing them for an undergraduate program?
7. Do you feel like you understand course requirements, both for courses in General Education requirements and within your specific programs?
8. What do you consider as an advising barrier in your current role as an academic advisor?
9. How do you define student success and how does the institution define it?
10. Tell me what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success as an academic advisor.
11. Describe an advising session, if applicable, where you felt the meeting with a student was unsuccessful.
12. Do you feel your role as an academic advisor is to help students in areas outside of academics, such as a student's personal life?

13. Do you feel an academic advisor and student relationship within a college institution can impact a student's desire to stay enrolled in a degree program?
14. Do you feel the administration supports your needs as an academic advisor at your institution? Do you consider this a barrier or a strategy in your academic advising duties?
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the structure and approach used for academic advising at your institution?
16. In your opinion, how could academic advising at your school be improved, both in terms of the process and the outcomes expected of students?

Appendix B
IRB Approval

IRB Approval

From: CSU IRB <irb@columbusstate.edu>
Date: Fri, Sep 9, 2022 at 10:10 AM
Subject: Exempt Approval: Protocol 23-003
To: Tracy Mitchell [Student] <mitchell_tracy@columbusstate.edu>, Jennifer Lovelace <lovelace_jennifer@columbusstate.edu>
Cc: CSU IRB <irb@columbusstate.edu>, Institutional Review Board <institutional_review@columbusstate.edu>

Institutional Review Board

Columbus State University

Date: 9/9/2022

Protocol Number: 23-003

Protocol Title: A Qualitative Investigation into the Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Best Advisement Practices

Principal Investigator: Tracy Mitchell

Co-Principal Investigator: Jennifer Lovelace

Dear Tracy Mitchell:

The Columbus State University Institutional Review Board or representative(s) has reviewed your research proposal identified above. It has been determined that the project is classified as exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations and has been approved. You may begin your research project immediately.

Please note any changes to the protocol must be submitted, using a Project Modification form, to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the IRB.

Sincerely,

Sammy Kanso, Graduate Student
Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Appendix C

Recruitment Emails

First Recruitment Email

Dear Participant,

My name is Tracy Mitchell, and I am a doctoral student at Columbus State University in Higher Education Administration. My dissertation is A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ACADEMIC ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF BEST ADVISEMENT PRACTICES. This study will explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective.

I request your participation as an academic advisor. A minimum of two years of experience as a college or university academic advisor is required for participation.

I hope you will accept this invitation to join as your responses could help gain more information about academic advising and its best practices. If you choose to participate in the study, you will receive compensation of an Amazon E-gift card for \$10.00 via email. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. and be held virtually via Zoom.

If you consent to participation, I have included the Informed Consent Form in this email, please return the signed form within five days to move forward with the process.

If you have any questions, please email me at mitchell_tracy@columbusstate.edu or via telephone at 404-831-3421 or Dr. Jennifer Lovelace, dissertation committee chair, at lovelace_jennifer@columbusstate.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Tracy Mitchell
Doctoral Candidate
Columbus State University
College of Education and Health Professions
Phone: 404-831-3421
Email: mitchell_tracy@columbusstate.edu

Second Recruitment Email

Dear Participant,

My name is Tracy Mitchell, and I am a doctoral student at Columbus State University in Higher Education Administration. My dissertation is A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO THE ACADEMIC ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF BEST ADVISEMENT PRACTICES. This study will explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective.

I sent you an email last week asking you to take part in a virtual interview about your experience as an academic advisor. I wanted to get in touch with you once more. I hope you will accept this invitation to join as your responses could help gain more information about academic advising and its best practices. If you choose to participate in the study, you will receive compensation of an Amazon E-gift card for \$10.00 via email. The interview will take approximately one hour and be held virtually via Zoom. Your contribution will help us learn more about academic advising and provide students with the best practices.

If you consent to participation, I have included the Informed Consent Form in this email, please return the signed form at your convenience to move forward with the process.

If you have any questions, please email me at mitchell_tracy@columbusstate.edu or via telephone at 404-831-3421 or Dr. Jennifer Lovelace, dissertation committee chair, at lovelace_jennifer@columbusstate.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,
Tracy Mitchell
Doctoral Student
Columbus State University

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Tracy Mitchell, a doctoral student in the College of Education and Health Professions at Columbus State University. This study is supervised by Dr. Jennifer Lovelace, Assistant Professor of Higher Education/Director, Doctoral Programs

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective.

II. Procedures:

To participate in the study, you will be required to complete a recorded Zoom interview at a mutually agreed upon time and date. The interview will consist of 16 open-ended questions centered on your personal experiences as an academic advisor. The duration of the interviews will be about 60 minutes. After the interview, you will be emailed a copy of your transcript to review for accuracy. You will be given a maximum of five days from the date the transcript is emailed back to you to complete your final review of the transcript. Once the review is concluded, you will need to email the researcher the final copy, including any changes if necessary, within the same five-day time frame. The anticipated time commitment for your participation in this study, including scheduling your appointment, participating in the interview and reviewing your transcript, will be no more than 30 days. The information gathered for this study will be used for presentations on the dissertation and its publishing. Future research initiatives may use the study's data collection.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

There will be no harm or risk during the interview process.

IV. Potential Benefits:

There are no potential benefits to the participants.

V. Costs and Compensation:

Upon completing the interview process, you will receive a \$10.00 Amazon E-gift card via email.

VI. Confidentiality:

Your responses to the interview questions will be kept strictly confidential and at no time will your actual identity be revealed. You will be assigned a pseudonym that will correlate with your interview responses. Any professional staff member who assists me with transcription of your responses will only know you by your pseudonym. All research documents, including transcripts, electronic notes, informed consent forms, participant confirmation emails, and audio recordings will be stored electronically on the researcher's password protected, locked personal computer and will be accessible only by the researcher. The recordings will be deleted once the transcription has been reviewed and approved. The locked, password-protected file system will store the remaining documents for the next five years. The researcher's computer will be permanently cleared of documents after five years.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Tracy Mitchell at 404-831-3421 or mitchell_tracy@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix E

Dr. Soden's Survey Instrument

Academic Advisor Interview Questions

Introduction (Read Aloud):

1. The topic for this study will be to discuss effective academic advising strategies that promote student success and barriers to effective academic advising. What do you like most about advising students? What do you like least?
2. Approximately how many student advisees do you have?
3. What are your advising philosophies, and how do you use these when advising students in preparing them for an undergraduate program?
4. Do you feel like you understand course requirements, both for courses in General Education requirements and within the areas of allied health care programs?
5. What do you consider as an advising barrier in your current role as an academic advisor?
6. Tell me what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success as an academic advisor.
7. Describe an advising session, if applicable, where you felt the meeting with a student was unsuccessful.
8. Do you feel your role as an academic advisor is to help students in areas outside of academics, such as a student's personal life?
9. Do you feel an academic advisor and student relationship within a college institution can impact a student's desire to stay enrolled in a degree program?
10. Do you feel the administration supports your needs as an academic advisor at your institution? Do you consider this a barrier or a strategy in your academic advising duties?

Conclusion and wrap-up

Please feel free to add any additional comments (dialogue) to what you consider effective academic advising strategies and what barriers you may see from an academic advisor's perspective that may prevent effective academic advising. We have come to the end of our interview questions today. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Guide/Protocol

Research Project: A Qualitative Investigation into the Academic Advisors' Perceptions of Best Advisement Practices

Purpose of the study: This study will explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the academic advisor's perspective.

The research questions for this study:

RQ1: What do academic advisors consider to be the best academic advising practices?

RQ 2: What do academic advisors perceive as barriers to effective academic advising?

Date:

Time of Interview:

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Participant Identifier/Pseudonym:

Greeting and Introduction:

Hello (Interview participant) and I appreciate your willingness to take part in this virtual interview. My name is Tracy Mitchell, and I am currently an Associate Director at Georgia State University's Robinson College of Business. In addition, I am pursuing my doctorate at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia.

This study aims to explore the practices and characteristics of optimal academic advising methods from the advisor's perspective.

Are you prepared to move on to the interview questions at this point?

- If yes, continue below.
- If no and if the participant is still interested in participating, find a better time to reschedule their interview.
- If no, the participant should be thanked for the time spent up to this point.

Excellent, and thank you again. You have already given your permission to take part in this interview and study by signing a formal consent form. To properly document your responses for later review, I must record our conversation today. The results of this study may be published, but no personally identifying information will be included in the publication. Your responses will

be kept strictly confidential, and this information will not be shared with anyone who is not involved in the study.

I will ask 16 interview questions. Using probing questions, I will request additional information, if necessary to understand the responses. The duration of the interview is estimated to be 60 minutes. To express my gratitude for your participation today, you will get a \$10 Amazon gift card as a thank you.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary. The risks associated with the study are minimal. You will also be free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to “not participate” in the study or if your responses are less than complimentary of your academic program.

Finally, I shared some contact information with you in my original email invitation and encourage you to contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Jennifer Lovelace, with any questions or concerns you have regarding the study.

Do you have any questions?

Do you agree to participate in this study? If so, please answer “yes” so that your verbal consent may be recorded. Again, thank you.

Yes: Document oral consent and continue with the interview.

No: Thank them for their time.

Interview Questions

1. How many years of experience do you have as an academic advisor?
2. What is your highest educational achievement?
3. How did you come to be in the position you are in now?
4. What do you like most about advising students? What do you like least about advising students?
5. Approximately how many student advisees do you have?
6. What are your advising philosophies, and how do you use these when advising students in preparing them for an undergraduate program?

7. Do you feel like you understand course requirements, both for courses in General Education requirements and within your specific programs?
8. What do you consider as an advising barrier in your current role as an academic advisor?
9. How do you define student success and how does the institution define it?
10. Tell me what you consider to be effective advising strategies to promote student success as an academic advisor.
11. Describe an advising session, if applicable, where you felt the meeting with a student was unsuccessful.
12. Do you feel your role as an academic advisor is to help students in areas outside of academics, such as a student's personal life?
13. Do you feel an academic advisor and student relationship within a college institution can impact a student's desire to stay enrolled in a degree program?
14. Do you feel the administration supports your needs as an academic advisor at your institution? Do you consider this a barrier or a strategy in your academic advising duties?
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the structure and approach used for academic advising at your institution?
16. In your opinion, how could academic advising at your school be improved, both in terms of the process and the outcomes expected of students?

I appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions during the interview. Please get in touch with me via email or phone if there is anything else you'd like to add or if you have any questions. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me or my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Lovelace.

I will be sending an electronic gift card to you.

Thank you yet again and have a good day!

Appendix G

Thank you and Follow up Email

Thank you and Follow up Email

Dear Participant,

Please accept my sincere gratitude for giving me your time to participate in this study. The transcript from your interview is included in this email. Please review it and let me know if you think there should be any significant changes. Once I have received your feedback, I will email your \$10 Amazon e-gift card. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further inquiries.

Thank you,

Tracy Mitchell
Doctoral Candidate
Columbus State University
College of Education and Health Professions
Phone: 404-831-3421
Email: mitchell_tracy@columbusstate.edu