

Impact of Advisor Recommending Beyond-The-Classroom/Experiential Learning Opportunities on Overall Satisfaction with Advising at UofSC

Quick Findings

Research suggests that students report greater overall satisfaction with academic advising when they discuss beyond-the-classroom and experiential learning opportunities with their academic advisor.

Summary

In 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), a national public advocacy and campus action initiative. The LEAP initiative identified "Essential Learning Outcomes" for a modern liberal education. These outcomes include knowledge of diverse cultures and geography, practical skill development, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. LEAP further identified ten high-impact practices shown to enhance student learning, engagement, and retention. These ten practices are: first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, ePortfolios, service learning, internships, and capstone courses/projects.

Academic advisors play a key role in connecting students intentionally to high-impact practices both in and beyond the formal curriculum that align with a student's educational, career, and personal goals. High-quality advisors help students make meaning of their co-curricular activities. In fact, according to Lowenstein (2005) "an excellent advisor does the same for the student's entire curriculum that the excellent teacher does for one course." He further suggests, "learning transpires when a student makes sense of his or her curriculum just as it does when a person understands an individual course, and the former is every bit as important as the latter (p. 69)."

Data from the 2019 Academic Advising Student Survey were analyzed to determine the impact of advisors discussing and recommending beyond-the-classroom activities such as study abroad, internships, peer leader positions, Graduation with Leadership Distinction, etc. on overall student satisfaction with advising.

The Academic Advising Student Survey is administered to a stratified random sample of students at the University of South Carolina during the spring semester of odd years. In spring 2019, the instrument was sent to 12,000 students and yielded an 11% response rate (n=1,087). The dataset was coded to include a variable that indicated whether advisors had recommended beyond-the-classroom activities to student's during advisement. In spring 2019, 710 students indicated their advisor had recommended beyond-the-classroom activities while 377 students reported that their advisor had not recommended beyond-the-classroom activities. The data was analyzed to find difference in means on overall satisfaction with advising between students whose advisors had recommended beyond-the-classroom activities and those whose advisors had not. An independent samples T-test yielded significant differences in overall satisfaction with advising for students who been encouraged to engage in beyond-the-classroom activities ($M=3.39$, $SD=0.03$) and students who had not ($M=2.04$, $SD=0.46$); $t(1,085)=-27.55$, $p = .000$.

