



# ATTAINING COLLEGE EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

Since taking office, the Biden-Harris Administration and the U.S. Department of Education (Department) have been committed to a new vision of college excellence—one that uplifts inclusivity, equity, and excellence, rather than exclusivity and privilege.

The Raise the Bar: Attaining College Excellence and Equity initiative reflects the Department's commitment to ensuring that students of all backgrounds, ages, disability statuses, and income levels can succeed in any postsecondary pathway. This initiative is focused on supporting institutions and states to implement key evidence-based strategies that address critical loss points along students' postsecondary journeys, including data-driven improvement, holistic advising and wraparound services, credit mobility and transfer support, and career-connected learning pathways.



## Key Focus Area: Holistic Advising and Wraparound Services

Getting to and through college can be a complex experience for students, and inadequate support can impede their progress toward completion. In a recent survey, nearly half of students reported that they have not been advised on the courses they need for graduation, including students in their senior year.<sup>1</sup>

Colleges and universities have historically relied on advisors to guide students' academic choices. Increasingly, institutions are expanding the role of advisors to connect students with both academic and non-academic services, including financial support, basic needs assistance, disability supports, career counseling, and more.

Effective advising—particularly holistic advising that is well-integrated with wraparound support services—

can play a central role in helping students navigate the complicated systems and processes that are critical to success on campus. Innovative models, such as Single Stop and the City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), have been shown to significantly increase retention and completion rates for students.<sup>2,3</sup>

Institutions can employ a range of strategies to maximize the impact of their advising and support services to help students overcome barriers to persistence and completion, including implementing comprehensive, integrated advising models; building guided pathways to academic success; integrating wraparound services into holistic advising; and guiding students to career success beyond completion.



1.

**IMPLEMENTING  
COMPREHENSIVE,  
INTEGRATED ADVISING  
MODELS**



2.

**BUILDING GUIDED  
PATHWAYS TO  
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**



3.

**INTEGRATING  
WRAPAROUND  
SERVICES INTO  
HOLISTIC ADVISING**



4.

**GUIDING STUDENTS  
TO CAREER SUCCESS  
BEYOND COMPLETION**

1. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/01/student-survey-reveals-gaps-core-academic-advising-functions>

2. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/InterventionReports/WWC\\_IR\\_Single\\_Stop\\_Report\\_Nov2020.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/InterventionReports/WWC_IR_Single_Stop_Report_Nov2020.pdf)

3. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Intervention/1072>



## 1. IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE, INTEGRATED ADVISING MODELS

Institutions are shifting away from optional, self-service advising with separate offices and services that students must manage to navigate on their own toward comprehensive advising models that design supports around students' needs and use case management approaches to integrate services across campus. These resources and frameworks can help institutions with redesigning advising to implement models that support the whole student.

- *Effective Advising for Postsecondary Students* by the Institute of Education Sciences (2021): <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/28>
- *Holistic Student Supports Redesign: A Toolkit* by Achieving the Dream (2018): <https://achievingthedream.org/holistic-student-supports-redesign-toolkit/>
- *Scaling Comprehensive Supports to Equitably Get Students to the Finish Line* by TICAS (2023): [https://ticas.org/college-completion/scaling-comprehensive-supports-to-equitably-get-students-to-the-finish-line\\_cass/](https://ticas.org/college-completion/scaling-comprehensive-supports-to-equitably-get-students-to-the-finish-line_cass/)



## 2. BUILDING GUIDED PATHWAYS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Students can face major roadblocks when navigating their academic pathways if they are not provided program-specific degree maps nor timely information to help them track their progress. These resources can help institutions implement guided pathways with clear milestones, proactive alerts, and support structures to help students stay on track to achieve their academic goals.

- *Guided Pathways Self-Assessment* by the Community College Research Center (2017): <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/what-we-are-learning-guided-pathways.html>
- *Explore Advising Technology Across the Student Journey* by the Advising Success Network et al. (2022): <https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Explore-Advising-Technology-Across-The-Student-Journe.pdf>
- *Student Success Center Network Coaching Toolbox* (2019) by Jobs for the Future: <https://www.jff.org/idea/sscncoachingtoolbox/>



## 3. INTEGRATING WRAPAROUND SERVICES INTO HOLISTIC ADVISING

Beyond academics, many students encounter financial hardships that can hinder their success and overall well-being. By connecting students to wraparound services, including need-based and emergency aid, affordable childcare and housing, and means-tested benefits, institutions can help students overcome these barriers to focus on their studies.

- *Addressing Basic Needs Insecurity Among College Students* by the Institute of Education Sciences (2021): <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/addressing-basic-needs.pdf>
- *Making College Affordable: Providing Low-Income Students with the Knowledge and Resources Needed to Pay for College* by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (2017): <https://www.luminafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/making-college-affordable.pdf>



## 4. GUIDING STUDENTS TO CAREER SUCCESS BEYOND COMPLETION

Helping students envision and achieve their career goals is a critical component of effective advising. By integrating career exploration, planning, and experiences into the advising process, institutions can help ensure students, including those with disabilities, graduate not just with a credential, but with the knowledge and skills necessary to enter and thrive in the competitive, integrated workforce.

- *Understanding Undergraduates' Career Preparation Experiences* by Strada Education Foundation (2021): <https://cci.stradaeducation.org/pv-release-dec-8-2021/>
- *Integrating Career Advising for Equitable Student Success* by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2021): <https://www.advisingsuccessnetwork.org/advising-tool-equity/integrating-career-advising-for-equitable-student-success/>