2024 MSUM Undergraduate Student Advising Experiences Survey

Summary

The MSUM Undergraduate Student Advising Experiences Survey was developed by the MSUM Academic Advising Committee to gather feedback on undergraduate student experiences with academic advising in order to identify and address advising resource and training needs and support advising practice, moving forward. Respondents were asked for feedback on their preferences for connecting with advisors; perceived availability, knowledge, and expertise of their advisors; relational aspects of advising; frequency of advising topics; students' own advising behaviors and knowledge; experiences navigating multiple majors and supplemental advising; and overall satisfaction with advising.

All undergraduate degree-seeking students enrolled at MSUM in Spring 2024 had the opportunity to be included in this study (N = 2882). A response rate of 20.6% was achieved, with 595 responses. Key findings and committee recommendations are summarized below.

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**Respondent Demographics and Advising Experiences**

- The percentage of respondents from various demographic groups was typically within 2-3 percentage points of the population demographic percentage, indicating the respondent population is largely reflective of the overall population (see Table 1)
- First time students and women were overrepresented in the respondent population as compared to transfer students and men, respectively.
- 98.7% of respondents know their assigned advisor
- 78.1% reported having been advised this spring at the time they completed the survey

Table 1. Advising Survey Respondent Demographics and Population Demographics

Demographic	Respondent %	Population %
Admit Type		
First Time	66.9%	61.8%
Transfer & Prev Degree	33.1%	38.2%
Class Year		
Freshman	13.4%	14.0%
Sophomore	21.7%	20.1%
Junior	22.0%	24.4%
Senior	39.2%	38.3%
Previous Degree	3.0%	2.6%
College		
Arts & Humanities	17.3%	16.6%
Business, Analytics & Communication	26.6%	29.6%
Education & Human Services	22.0%	21.1%
Science, Health, & the Environment	33.4%	31.5%
University College	0.7%	1.2%
Gender & Sexual Identity		
Woman	67.9%	63.3%
Man	23.1%	36.7%
Transgender/Non-binary	5.8%	Not available
LGBTQA+	19.5%	Not available
Straight (heterosexual)	75.0%	Not available
First Generation Status		
First Generation	39.2%	40.6%
Continuing Generation	56.8%	58.1%
Unknown	1.7%	1.3%
Pell Eligibility		
Pell Eligible	31.3%	31.1%
Non-Pell Eligible	68.7%	68.9%
Race/Ethnicity/Residency		
Domestic Student of Color	14.8%	16.8%
Domestic White Student	78.0%	77.7%
International Student	6.7%	5.0%
Unknown	0.5%	0.5%

Frequency of Advisor Contact:

- 79.6% of respondents have contact with their advisor between one and three times/semester
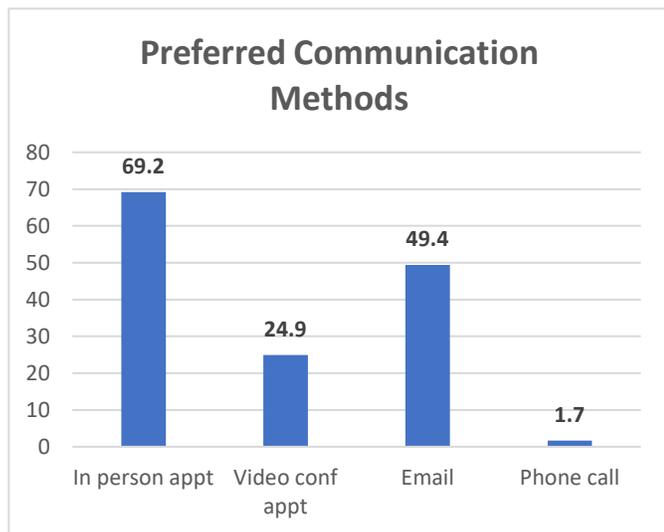
Frequency of Advisor Contact
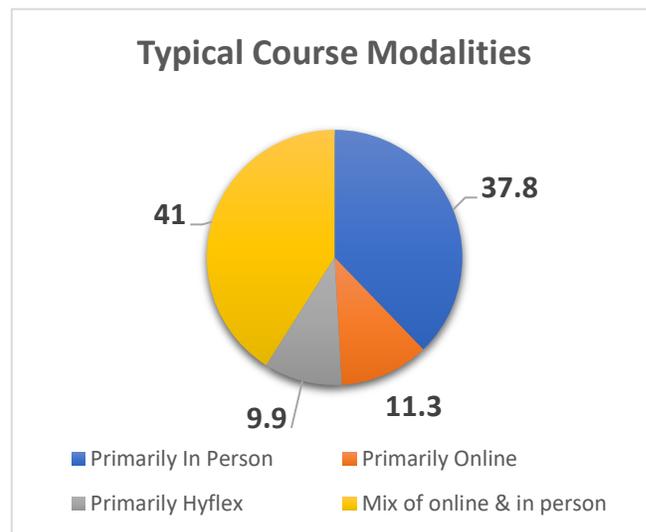
1.7
18.8
37.4
42.2

- Once/semester
- 2-3 times/semester
- 4+ times/semester
- No contact
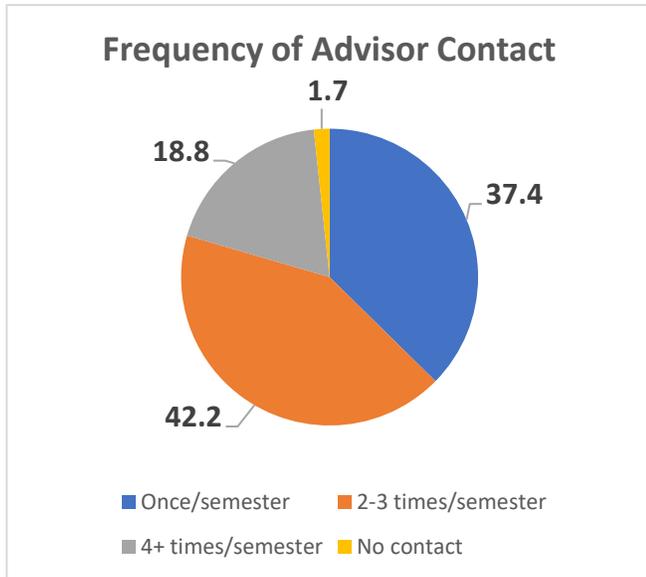
Advisor Response Time:

- 91.8% of respondents indicated their advisor responds to questions within 3 days

Advisor Response Time

4.8 1.5 1.9
18.9
72.9

- Within 24 hours
- Within 2-3 days
- Within a week
- Longer than a week
- Does not respond

Preferred Communication Methods
(select all that apply):

Preferred Communication Methods

Method	Value
In person appt	69.2
Video conf appt	24.9
Email	49.4
Phone call	1.7

Typical Course Modalities:

Typical Course Modalities

41
37.8
9.9
11.3

- Primarily In Person
- Primarily Online
- Primarily Hyflex
- Mix of online & in person
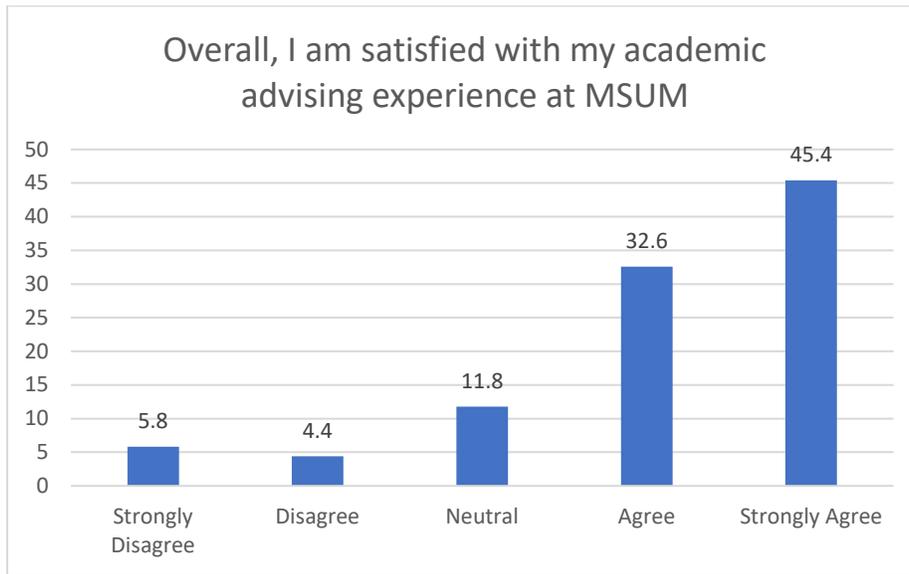
Overall Satisfaction

- Respondents reported a mean level of agreement of **4.07** regarding overall satisfaction with academic advising at MSUM, with 78.0% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing they are satisfied
  (scale: Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree=2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5)

Overall, I am satisfied with my academic advising experience at MSUM

Category	Value
Strongly Disagree	5.8
Disagree	4.4
Neutral	11.8
Agree	32.6
Strongly Agree	45.4

- There are no significant differences in overall satisfaction between student groups based on Pell eligibility, First generation status, gender identity, residency (domestic/international), admit type (transfer/first time), class year, or academic college.
- A significant difference in overall satisfaction exists ($p < .05$) between students of color and white students, with students of color ($M = 4.26$) reporting significantly higher levels of agreement that they are satisfied with their academic advising experience than white students ($M = 4.03$)

Key Themes Regarding Overall Advising Experiences:

Respondents indicated they find the following aspects of advising to be **most beneficial**: (N=463)
- Course selection and registration for next term (131 responses)
- Advisor knowledge and guidance: provides accurate, helpful guidance and insight about courses, resources, graduation requirements, and other questions (79 responses)
- Caring relationships: developing a relationship with caring and supportive advisors (76 responses)
- Timely graduation planning: intentional focus on timely graduation, including setting a clear path and discussions regarding staying on track (73 responses)
- Accessibility and responsiveness: availability for appointments, meetings in preferred modalities, timely responses to questions (63 responses)
- Preparation for future goals: intentional focus on and support for students' post-graduation goals (52 responses)
- Personalized support: personalized guidance, flexibility and understanding of student lives (51 responses)

Respondents made the following **suggestions for improving** academic advising at MSUM (N=425)
- No suggestions (170 responses)
- Enhanced career and future planning: four-year planning, ensuring course availability aligned with plans, purposeful discussion of careers and graduate school opportunities (44 responses)
- Increased contact: additional meetings and/or longer meeting times with advisor (30 responses)
- Personalized advising: build relationships and understand individual student needs and goals (28 responses)

- Communication and scheduling: provide timely communication and responses, availability, and smooth processes for scheduling appointments (27 responses)
- Improve prescriptive advising: provide clearer, more accurate guidance on academic requirements (25 responses)
- Proactive advisor communication: sharing information regarding academic possibilities, engagement opportunities, internships, etc. (20 responses)
- DARs education and accuracy: ensuring DARs are accurate and advisees can use them effectively (13 responses)
- Advisor training and evaluation: Ensure advisors are consistently trained and evaluated (13 responses)
- Assign multiple advisors for double majors and minors (11 responses)
- Advisor continuity: reducing advisor changes/having a consistent advisor throughout student's college career (10 responses)

Advisor Availability & Knowledge
- Respondents reported consistently high levels of agreement with all advisor availability and knowledge statements
- There were no significant differences in levels of agreement among any demographic groups regarding advisor availability and knowledge

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements based on your experiences with your assigned academic advisor at MSUM. *(Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree=2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5)*	N	Mean	SD
The availability of my academic advisor is currently meeting my needs	579	4.32	.931
I am able to meet with my advisor in a modality that works for me (i.e., in person, online, via phone, etc)	580	4.50	.828
It is relatively easy to make an appointment with my advisor	580	4.41	.888
I am given the time I need during my academic advising appointment(s)	579	4.46	.850
My advisor is knowledgeable about the requirements for my degree.	571	4.43	.910
If my advisor does not know the answer to one of my questions, they make the effort to connect me to someone who does.	572	4.36	.925
My advisor is a good source of accurate information regarding academic policies (e.g., add/drop, grading, holds, academic standing, etc)	574	4.34	.961
My advisor has provided me with accurate information regarding graduation requirements	574	4.34	.939

Advising Topics Frequency
- The most frequently discussed advising topic was academic goals and progress toward those goals
- Lower frequencies were reported for career or graduate school opportunities or special opportunities such as study abroad, internships, etc.
- The lowest frequencies were reported for co-curricular activities and resources for well-being
- Significant differences were found between students in various academic colleges, transfer and first-time students, and based on gender identity; see Demographic Differences in Results for details

Thinking about academic advising, about how often has your advisor discussed the following with you? *(Never = 1; Rarely = 2; Sometimes = 3; Often = 4)*	N	Mean	SD
My academic goals and progress toward those goals	563	3.45	.815
Career opportunities and/or appropriate graduate programs in my field of interest	568	2.99	1.000
Special opportunities (study abroad, internship, service-learning, research, etc.)	568	2.74	1.071
Participation in co-curricular activities (organizations or clubs, performing arts, sports, etc.)	565	2.58	1.125
Resources for my well-being (health, counseling, financial guidance, etc.)	567	2.57	1.093

Relational Aspects of Advising

- Respondents reported consistently high levels of agreement with all advisor relationality statements
- Women reported significantly higher levels of agreement with all advisor relationality statements than men

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements based on your experiences with your assigned academic advisor at MSUM *(Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree=2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5)*	N	Mean	SD
My academic advisor cares about my success as a student.	563	4.46	.827
My academic advisor encourages me to contact them when I need help.	563	4.38	.931
My advisor listens closely to my concerns and questions, whether they are academic, professional, or personal.	564	4.34	.930
My academic advisor refers me to other resources at MSUM when needed	565	4.22	.925

Advisee Expectations and Knowledge

- Respondents reported consistently high levels of frequency of engaging in advising activities, including making and keeping appointments, attending meetings prepared, and bringing DARs to meetings
- Respondents reported very high levels of agreement regarding understanding how to use eServices and their Degree Audit Report (DAR)
- Lower levels of agreement were reported regarding awareness of career or grad school resources or experiential learning options
- Significant differences were found in both frequency of engaging in activities and level of agreement regarding student expectations among multiple demographic groups; see Demographic Differences in Results for details

Please indicate about how often you engage in the following advising activities. *(Never = 1; Rarely = 2; Sometimes = 3; Always = 4)*	N	Mean	SD
As an advisee, I bring my Degree Audit Report and/or Plan of Study to my advising meeting(s)	539	3.53	.798
As an advisee, I make appointments to see my advisor	549	3.64	.655
As an advisee, I keep appointments I made with my advisor	541	3.88	.402
As an advisee, I attend my advising appointments prepared with questions and ideas	550	3.83	.418

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: *(Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree=2; Agree = 3; Strongly Agree = 4)*	N	Mean	SD
I know how to access available resources at MSUM to meet my personal, academic, and career goals	565	3.27	.604
I know how to use eServices to enroll each semester	564	3.63	.514
I understand exactly what is required to complete my degree in the timeframe I have identified	566	3.36	.686
I have a close connection to one or more faculty members in my major	566	3.03	.865
I know how to access, utilize, and interpret my Degree Audit Report (DAR)	566	3.43	.655
I am aware of resources available to aid in my transition from college to career or graduate school	560	2.88	.814
I understand how the Liberal Arts and Science Curriculum (LASC) contributes to my overall education at MSUM	560	3.02	.803
I am aware of on-campus involvement opportunities that relate to my personal and/or academic goals	560	3.12	.721
I am aware of experiential learning options (such as internships, practicums, etc.) and the necessary preparation to apply	561	3.02	.789

Demographic Differences in Results

Independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance were conducted to determine whether there are differences in survey responses based on student demographics. Overall, few significant differences were found among various demographic groups regarding overall satisfaction, advisor availability, advisor knowledge, advising relationships, or advisee expectations and knowledge. The significant differences that were found are noted below by demographic groups.

Admit Type:

- Transfer students reported significantly lower frequencies of discussing *career opportunities and/or appropriate graduate programs in their field of interest* and *participation in co-curricular activities (organizations or clubs, performing arts, sports, etc.)* than first-time students
- Transfer students reported significantly lower levels of agreement than first-time students with the following statements regarding campus services and resources:
    - I know how to use eServices to enroll each semester
    - I know how to access, utilize, and interpret my Degree Audit Report (DAR)
    - I am aware of on-campus involvement opportunities that relate to my personal and/or academic goals
    - I am aware of experiential learning options (such as internships, practicums, etc.) and the necessary preparation to apply

Class Year:

- Freshmen reported significantly lower frequencies of bringing their Degree Audit Report to advising meetings, keeping advising appointments, and attending advising appointments prepared with questions and ideas
- Seniors reported significantly higher levels of agreement with the statement *I understand exactly what is required to complete my degree in the timeframe I have identified* than freshmen
- Juniors and seniors reported significantly higher levels of agreement with the statement *I have a close connection to one or more faculty members in my major* than freshmen and sophomores

Academic College:

- College of Science, Health, and the Environment (CSHE) students reported significantly higher frequencies of discussing *career opportunities and/or appropriate graduate programs in their field of interest* and *special opportunities such as study abroad, internship, service-learning, research, etc.* with their advisors than Arts & Humanities (CAH) or Business, Analytics & Communication (CBAC) students
- CSHE and College of Education & Human Services (CEHS) students reported significantly higher frequencies of discussing *resources for my well-being (health, counseling, financial guidance, etc.)* than CAH or CBAC students
- CBAC students reported significantly lower levels of agreement with the statement, *I have a close connection to one or more faculty members in my major,* than CAH, CEHS, and CSHE students

Gender Identity:

- Women reported significantly higher levels of agreement with *all Advisor Relationality statements* than men
- Women reported significantly higher frequencies of discussing *resources for my well-being (health, counseling, financial guidance, etc.)* than transgender/non-binary students
- Men reported significantly lower frequencies of discussing *career opportunities and/or appropriate graduate programs in their field of interest* with their advisor than women
- Men reported significantly lower levels of agreement with the statement, *I know how to use eServices to enroll each semester*, than women and transgender/non-binary students

<u>Pell Eligibility:</u>

- Pell eligible students reported significantly lower levels of agreement than Non-Pell eligible students with the following statements regarding awareness of campus resources and opportunities
  - I am aware of resources available to aid in my transition from college to career or graduate school
  - I am aware of on-campus involvement opportunities that relate to my personal and/or academic goals
  - I am aware of experiential learning options (such as internships, practicums, etc.) and the necessary preparation to apply

<u>Race/Ethnicity/Residency:</u>

- Students of color (M = 4.26) reported significantly higher levels of agreement that they are satisfied with their overall academic advising experience than white students (M = 4.03)
- Students of color reported significantly lower frequencies of *attending advising appointments prepared with questions and ideas* than white students
- International students reported significantly lower levels of agreement with the statement *I know how to access, utilize, and interpret my Degree Audit Report (DAR)* than domestic students

<u>First Generation:</u> no significant differences found between first generation students and their continuing generation peers regarding any responses

Multiple Majors & Supplemental Advising

<u>Multiple major & minor advising</u>

- 11.6% reported having more than one major
- 29.1% reported having a minor or certificate outside of their major area
- Respondents identified the following **challenges** in navigating multiple majors/minor advising (N=191)
  - Overall smooth experience/no challenges (57 responses)
  - Navigating technical requirements: course selection, understanding requirements, reducing overlap, and navigating overrides/technical barriers (43 responses)
    - "Confusing regarding which classes I do/do not need. Understanding the levels of credits and pre-requisites for each class"
  - Need for additional advisor: primary advisor unfamiliar with or unsupportive of additional major or minor, lack of access to DAR or coordination between areas (35 responses)
    - "My advisor only knows what the requirements for one major are and struggles helping me create a class schedule that works for my needs"
  - Timely completion and coordinating/balancing schedules (28 responses)
    - "The hardest part about having multiple majors is aligning my schedule correctly so that I can take all of my courses when I need to in order to not fall behind on courses I need to take"
  - Unpredictable course availability and scheduling conflicts (21 responses)
    - "I don't know when certain classes that I need will be offered and I don't know who to ask about it"
- Respondents identified the following **supports** that would help them navigate multiple majors/minors (N=182)
  - No additional support needed (41 responses)
  - Formalized advising support for multiple majors/minors (36 responses)
    - "It would be helpful if I could be assigned an advisor for both my majors."
  - Clear documentation and communication of requirements (19 responses)
    - "A more clear and concise "roadmap" to complete both of the majors."

- - Predictable and flexible course options (17 responses)
      - "Knowing when courses are offered (year-round, spring only, etc.)"

Supplemental advising

- 15.8% reported receiving supplemental advising from someone other than their assigned advisor
- Sources of supplemental advising included:
  - Another faculty member not assigned to them: 74.5%
  - ASC staff member: 19.1%
  - SRC: 7.4%
  - Peer mentor: 11.7%
- Supplemental advising contacts were identified by:
  - Website: 13.8%
  - Referred by advisor: 30.9%
  - Took a class from them: 48.9%
  - Fellow student recommended: 11.7%
  - Responded to outreach from them: 7.4%
  - Visited a campus office: 14.9%
- Reasons for seeking out supplemental advising included: (N=80)
  - Seeking assistance with a double major or minor (19 responses)
  - Seeking a second opinion or more specific advice (14 responses)
  - Dissatisfied with advising or advisor unavailable (13 responses)
  - Support for technical issues or special programs (GRIT, Honors, etc) (11 responses)

Academic Advising Committee Recommendations

In light of the above findings from the Spring 2024 Student Advising Experiences survey, the MSUM Academic Advising Committee recommends the following:

Advising as Equity and Retention Practice

Based on the consistently high levels of satisfaction with overall advising and the value students place on relationships with advisors, departments and individual advisors are encouraged to purposefully consider advising as an intentional retention and equity practice

- Departments are encouraged to consistently identify advising or adjacent activities as a department-wide focus in workplans
- Advisors are encouraged to include advising development and practice in Professional Development Plans (PDPs), including regular assessment of their own advising. Support for advising assessment, including example surveys, is available from the Academic Success Center.
- Develop trainings and resources to support advisors working with historically underserved students

Prescriptive Advising

Prescriptive advising components (i.e., course selection guidance, degree requirements, navigating systems and policies) remain critical to students' overall advising experience.

- All advisors are strongly encouraged to complete the Advisor Certification training program prior to receiving advisee assignments or as identified in PDPs to support ongoing development

- Departments are encouraged to provide new advisors with a point of contact for department-specific advising questions
- Consistently provide proactive communication regarding advising expectations and tools, including the use of DARs, eServices, and other resources, to all new first year students, transfer students, and international students
- Multiple Majors/Minors Advising:
  - Assign multiple advisors for students with multiple majors, minors, or certificates outside of their primary major area to ensure students have identified, knowledgeable points of contact for all declared programs and advisors have access to all relevant student information
  - Departments with dual majors or major-minor combinations that are frequently paired are encouraged to collaborate to provide smooth dual advising processes and communications, and reduce course scheduling conflicts, as feasible
- Transfer Student Advising:
  - Provide additional university resources to support onboarding transfer students to address knowledge and experience gaps related to advising and registration, including use of DARs
  - Departments are encouraged to identify key points of contact to work with transfer students that are knowledgeable about transfer student challenges and systematically discuss career and engagement opportunities

Future-Focused Advising

- Systematically integrate **four-year/long-term planning** in to advising early in students' academic career to support students making timely progress toward graduation and increase advising time allocated to career and academic goal discussions and personalized support
  - Department-wide use of the Graduation Planner or another four-year planning approach may assist with establishing predictable department-level course scheduling
  - Support predictable course scheduling, staffing, and course availability through advance planning and reducing changes at the administrative and departmental levels that impact student registration and completion timelines
- Systematically integrate **discussion of career and/or graduate program goals and opportunities and experiential learning opportunities** (such as study abroad, internships, etc.) early and regularly in students' academic careers
  - Explore opportunities to integrate career/graduate school discussions and resources into curriculum at the departmental level
  - Integrate intentional four-year co-curricular planning into advising, such as through the use of the College to Career Major Maps available for all majors *(Note: especially critical to bridge the gap in career-focused discussions for transfer students, Pell eligible students, and students in majors without a defined career path)*
  - Provide trainings and resources to assist advisors in integrating career readiness into advising, including career champion advisor training