

University of Maine at Fort Kent Advising Survey - Spring 2008

Executive Summary

- The survey asked why and how often students visited advisors, and their evaluation of advisors.
- In general our advisors are rated very well, and they appear to have a good overall relationship with their advisees.
- 68 students responded to the survey, 48% of whom were First Year students
- Almost 45% of the students who indicated a major were Education or Nursing students.
- Most students made one or two visits to their advisor. Only 11.8% made four or more visits.
- 95.5% of visits were for course selection; about 6% of visits also concerned career counseling, course load problems, selection of major, or personal problems.
- Advisors appear to be easily accessible: 50.7% of appointments were made in person, and 22.4% of visits occurred when the student walked in during office hours.
- 62.7% of students were registered for classes by their advisor during their meeting.
- In response to the statement “In general, I am satisfied with my advisor and the advising I have received”, 90% of the respondents gave a rating of 3 or higher on a five point scale.
- Students feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues with advisors: over 80% of respondents replied “Strongly Agree” in response to the statement “keeps information confidential”.
- Administrative advisors are visited more often to select majors; visits to Humanities and Education advisors center on course selection.
- Nursing students dealt more with personal and career counseling issues than other students.
- There are no statistically significant differences among the divisions in advisor ratings.
- Almost half of the respondents were First Year students, with the remainder evenly spread among the years.
- Juniors and Seniors make many more visits than students in earlier years.
- Only Juniors and Seniors report a large number of visits that dealt with personal issues, and only Seniors reported a large number of visits dealing with career counseling.
- There are no statistically significant differences among the class years in advisor ratings.
- In future, it is advisable to recruit respondents a little more actively.
- The Advising Survey should be carried during Fall term, and respondents recruited actively.
- The rating items should be trimmed, and adjusted so to include an option of “Somewhat Agree”.
- We must set targets that define “excellent” performance for individual advisors and for divisions.

Methodology

This survey was intended to assess some aspects of student involvement with their advisors, especially how often and for what purpose students sought them out. Of equal interest was an overall evaluation of advisors by students, especially of their availability, helpfulness, and knowledge. The survey questionnaire was designed and fielded by Kate Fecinta (Student Success Coordinator), with input and assistance from the Office of Institutional Research. In May of 2008, all students were asked to complete and return the questionnaire.

Analysis of Overall Results

68 students responded to the survey. As shown in Table 1A, 48% of the students indicated they were First Year students; Sophomores and Seniors were each about 16% the respondents, and Juniors were only about 7%.

	Frequency	Percent
First Year	33	48%
Second Year	11	16%
Junior	5	7%
Senior	11	16%
No Answer	9	13%
Total	69	100%

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Accounting	1	2%	Business Management	1	2%
Behavioral Science	1	2%	Environmental Studies	6	9%
Biology	4	6%	Forestry	6	9%
Business	3	5%	Criminal Justice	2	3%
Education	5	8%	French	1	2%
Elem Education	6	9%	University Studies	2	3%
English	1	2%	Undecided	5	8%
Nursing	15	23%	Secondary Ed	4	6%
Public Safety Adm	2	3%	Communication Studies	1	2%

Almost 45% of the students who indicated a major were Education or Nursing students (15 each), and Forestry and Environmental Sciences each had 6 students (or 9.1%). No other majors had more than 4 students – see Table 1B.

As shown in Table 2 (below), the majority of students made one or two visits to their advisor this spring. Only 11.8% (n=8) made four or more visits. Only two students indicated they had not visited their advisor at all this semester; one because they did not know who their advisor is, and another because they did not think they needed to see their advisor.

	Frequency	Percent
0	2	2.9%
1	20	29.4%
2	27	39.7%
3	11	16.2%
4 or more	8	11.8%
Total	68	100%

Students often have more than one reason for seeing their advisor. Although the questionnaire asked students to indicate only one reason for their visit, many selected more than one. Table 3 is a composite of these multiple responses - totals are greater than the number of respondents. The majority of visits were for course selection: 95.5% of all students saw their advisor for this purpose. Four to six students saw their advisor for career counseling, course load problems, selection of major, or personal problems. No students needed help from their advisor to withdraw from or to add or drop a course.

	Frequency	Percent
Course selection/registration	64	95.50%
Issues with current course load	4	6%
Career counseling	4	6%
Selection of major/minor	4	6%
Personal/Life issues	6	9%
Total	82	
NOTE: Percentages are calculated against number of students, rather than against number of responses; Total of percentages is greater than 100.0		

Similarly, students often provided more than one response when asked how they arranged their visit with their advisor (see Table 4). Overall, advisors appear to be easily accessible: a majority of appointments were made in person (50.7%, n=34), and the next likeliest means of arranging a visit

was to walk in during office hours (22.4%, n=15). Making appointments by phone or email was much less popular; only one student walked in during non-office hours. Although not presented here in table form, it should be noted that over two thirds of all students were able to see their advisor within a day (69.7%, n=46). Only 3 students (4.5%) had to wait a week or more.

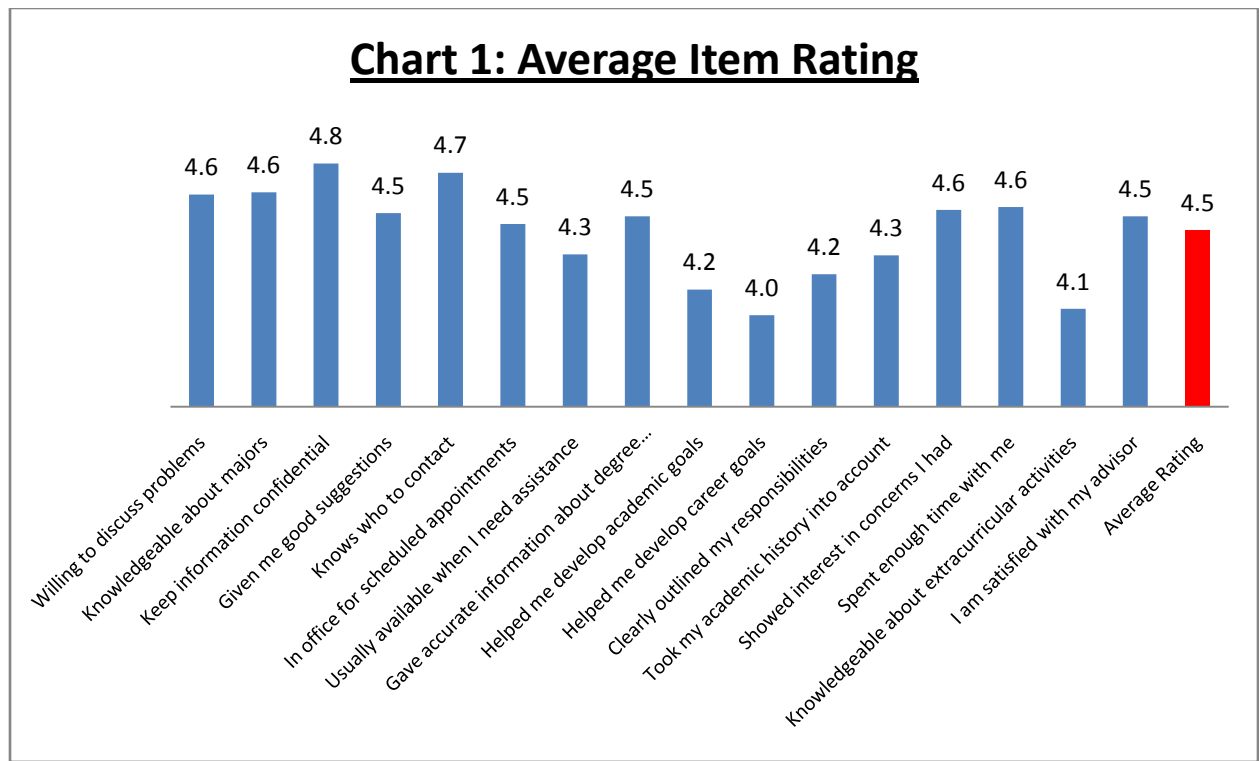
	Frequency	Percent
Made an appointment by phone	9	13.4%
Made an appointment by email	8	11.9%
Made an appointment in person	34	50.7%
Walked in during office hours	15	22.4%
Walked in during non-office hours	1	1.5%
Total	86	
NOTE: Percentages are calculated against number of students, rather than against number of responses; Total of percentages is greater than 100.0		

A large majority of students (62.7%, n=42) were registered for classes by their advisor during their meeting (see Table 5), and far fewer (29.9%, n=20) brought a paper form to the registrar's office. It would appear that our advisors are comfortable with registering their advisees online.

	Frequency	Percent
My advisor registered me for classes during an advising meeting	42	62.7%
I brought my signed registration form to the Registrar	20	29.9%
Other	5	7.5%
Total	37	

The heart of the survey is Question 7: "Please rate the following statements as they relate to your advisor and/or your advising experience". In general, students were enthusiastic about their advisors. 90% (n=46) of the respondents gave a rating of 3 or higher on a five point scale in

response to the statement “In general, I am satisfied with my advisor and the advising I have received”. Over 80% of respondents gave the highest possible rating (“Strongly Agree”) to their advisor in response to the statement “keeps information confidential” – a clear indication that students feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues with their advisors. Advisors, as a group, scored lower on four items: “helped me define and develop my academic goals”; “helped me define and develop my career goals”; “helped me understand my responsibilities”; “knowledgeable about extracurricular activities”. Even on these items, though, the average rating was at least a 4 on a 5 point scale: these “low” ratings are still very good. In general our advisors are rated very well, and they appear to have a good overall relationship with their advisees.



Analysis of Results by Division

Student advisors are drawn from the four academic divisions (Education, Arts & Humanities, Natural & Behavioral Sciences, and Nursing) and from the college administrative offices of Academic & Counseling Services and Student Success Coordinator. Table 6 shows the number of visits made to advisor from each of these areas. NBS is the largest division, so it is not surprising that the largest number of advisor visits were in this division. The relatively large number of visits made to Administration advisors is notable, as are the very few visits made to Nursing and Humanities advisors.

	Frequency	Percent
ADMIN	16	23.2%
EDU	13	18.8%
HUM	1	1.4%
NBS	34	49.3%
NUR	5	7.2%
Total	69	100.0%

There are no divisional differences in the number of advisor visits or the way visits are arranged (except that NBS students are more likely to walk in during office or non-office hours than other students). Some differences appear in the purpose of advisor visits, shown in Table 7.

	Advisor Division				
	ADMIN	EDU	HUM	NBS	NUR
Course selection/registration	93.3%	100.0%	100.0%	94.1%	100.0%
Issues with current course load		8.3%		5.9%	20.0%
Career counseling	6.7%	8.3%		2.9%	20.0%
Selection of major/minor	20.0%	8.3%		2.9%	
Personal/Life issues	6.7%			8.8%	20.0%

Percentages are based on number of students reporting each purpose – students can visit for more than one purpose, so percentages sum to more than 100%.

Administrative advisors are visited much more often to select majors, while visits to Humanities and Education advisors appear to center on course selection and registration. Nursing students report many more visits that dealt with course load, career counseling, and personal issues than

students in other divisions. There are no statistically significant differences among the divisions in their ratings for the Question 7 items. However, it should be noted that overall the Education advisors have a mean rating higher than other divisions, and a full half point higher than NBS, which is lowest rated.

Analysis of Results by Class Year

Almost half of the respondents were First Year students, with the remainder fairly evenly spread among the years. 13% of the respondents did not indicate their class year, and were not included in the rest of this analysis. One noticeable difference among the class years is that Juniors and Seniors make many more visits than students in earlier years (see Table 8). This is especially true for Juniors, who all reported making at least two visits during the school year.

	Class Year			
	First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
0	3%	9%		
1	30%	36%		36%
2	45%	36%	60%	9%
3	15%	9%	20%	27%
4 or more	6%	9%	20%	27%

	Class Year			
	First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Course selection/registration	96.9%	100.0%	100.0%	90.9%
Issues with current courseload				9.1%
Career counseling	3.1%			27.3%
Selection of major/minor	9.4%			9.1%
Personal/Life issues	3.1%	10.0%	20.0%	18.2%

This pattern is mirrored in the purpose of student visits (Table 9): Only Juniors and Seniors report a large number of visits that dealt with personal issues, and Seniors are the only group that reported a large number of visits dealing with career counseling. However, as with the division, the actual rating of advisors does not vary a great deal among class years: there are no statistically significant differences, nor any that are relatively large. So as with divisional

differences, class year appears to affect how often a student sees an advisor, and for what purposes, but does not seem to alter the student/advisor relationship.

Conclusions

It is of course possible, even likely, that only those students who regarded their advisors well were more likely to take the time to complete this questionnaire. In future, it would seem advisable to recruit respondents a little more actively, especially among the upper classes. To avoid “survey fatigue” this may involve pushing the Advising Survey to the end of the Fall term, so it doesn’t conflict with other efforts at the end of academic year. It would be worthwhile to shorten the list of rating items a bit, to help the task of responding seem a bit less onerous to the students. We should also adjust our ratings so that the “Neutral” option becomes “Somewhat Agree”: this would make it more likely that students would respond with middle range ratings if that is indeed how they feel – “Neutral” suggests an absence of any feeling, which students might not identify with. Finally, if we seek to provide an ongoing evaluation of advising, we must set targets that define “excellent” and “good” performances, perhaps for both individual advisors and for divisions.

It is difficult to infer any wider pattern of characteristics from such a small sample; there is no strong basis for generalizations to be made from these findings. Still, it would appear that many of our faculty are highly skilled at the tasks of student advising. It is also evident that the quality of student advising is fairly even across academic divisions and across class years. However, differences in the concerns and aims of students across class years are noticeable, and suggest that further consideration of these factors may help to further improve our advising. Students in different divisions also appear to have somewhat different concerns, and this may also affect which skills or knowledge are desirable in advisors. This spring’s Advising Survey still points out areas where we can improve, but our advising effort is clearly a positive part of student experience.

University of Maine at Fort Kent Advising Survey - Spring 2007

Class Level: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Major: _____

Minor (if applicable): _____

Advisor's Name: _____

1. How many times did you meet with your advisor this semester?

- 0 (if you select this as your answer, please proceed to question 8)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

2. What was the **MAIN** purpose for your contact with your advisor? (please select only one)

- Course selection/registration
- Add/Drop process
- Withdrawal from course(s)
- Issues with current courseload
- Career counseling
- Selection of major/minor
- Personal/Life issues

3. How did you arrange to meet with your advisor?

- Made an appointment by phone
- Made an appointment by email
- Made an appointment in person
- Walked in during office hours
- Walked in during non-office hours
- Other: _____

4. How long after you contacted your advisor did you have to wait to get an appointment?

- Less than 1 day
- 1 day
- 2-3 days
- 4-6 days
- 1 week or more

5. How did you register for your classes this semester?

- My advisor registered me for classes during an advising meeting
- I received my RAN number and registered online through DSIS
- I brought my signed registration form to the Registrar's Office
- Other: _____

7. Please rate the following statements as they relate to your advisor and/or your advising experience.

SA = Strongly Agree **A** = Agree **N** = Neutral **D** = Disagree **SD** = Strongly Disagree

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
My advisor is willing to discuss my problems and/or concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor is knowledgeable about the majors and minors offered at UMFK	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust my advisor to keep my information confidential	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor has given me good suggestions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor knows who to contact for further information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor is in his/her office for scheduled appointments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor is usually available when I need assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor gave me accurate information about my specific academic degree requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor helped me define and develop my academic goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor helped me define and develop my career goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor clearly outlined and helped me understand my responsibilities in the advising process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor took my academic history into account during our advising meeting(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor showed interest in any concerns that I had	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor spent enough time with me to discuss concerns that I had	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My advisor was knowledgeable about and recommended appropriate extracurricular activities and organizations at UMFK	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, I am satisfied with my advisor and the advising I have received	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What is the **MAIN** reason that you did not meet with your advisor? (*please select only one*)

- I do not think I need advising
- I could not get an appointment
- I do not know who my advisor is
- I do not like to ask for help
- I did not have the time
- I do not feel that my advisor cares
- I do not feel that my advisor is informative
- I do not feel that my advisor listens to me
- Other: _____

Comments: _____