

# University of Maine at Fort Kent Advising Survey – Fall 2009

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This survey aimed to assess student involvement with their advisors, especially how often and for what purpose students sought them out.
- Of central interest was an overall evaluation of advisors by students, especially of their availability, helpfulness, and knowledge.
- In general our advisors are rated very well, and they appear to have a good overall relationship with their advisees.
- 169 students responded to the survey, 48% of whom were First Year students
- Almost 48% of the students who indicated a major were Education or Nursing students.
- Most students made one or two visits to their advisor. Only 16.2% made four or more visits.
- 89.9% of students visited their advisor for course selection; about 12-15% of visits also concerned career counseling, course load problems, selection of major, or personal problems.
- Advisors appear to be easily accessible: 50.9% of appointments were made in person, and 16.6% of visits occurred when the student walked in during office hours.
- 83.4% 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”, 94.7% of the respondents gave a rating of 3 or higher on a five point scale.
- Students feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues with advisors: over 85% of respondents replied “Strongly Agree” in response to the statement “keeps information confidential”.
- There are no statistically significant differences among the divisions in advisor ratings.
- Teacher Certification students rate advisors much lower than the overall respondent group.
- A student’s general advisor rating (“I am satisfied with my advisor”) is strongly correlated with the advisor’s availability and interactive skills.
- The correlation between a student’s general advisor rating and characteristics such as career or academic goal setting is much weaker.
- There are no statistically significant differences among the class years in advisor ratings.
- Students who did see their advisors generally feel they lack time or do not need an advisor.

## ANALYSIS

### 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 modifications made this year by the Office of Institutional Research (primarily to allow for multiple responses to several questions). In October/November of 2009, all students were asked to complete and return the questionnaire. This request was made both by the student's advisor (who provided a questionnaire when asked) and by email.

### Why and How Student Visit Advisors

169 students who had visited their advisor during the fall responded to the survey. (25 students who responded but had not seen their advisor are discussed separately below). As shown in Table 1A, 34% of the students indicated they were First Year students; Sophomores and Seniors were each about 25% the respondents, and Juniors were only about 15%.

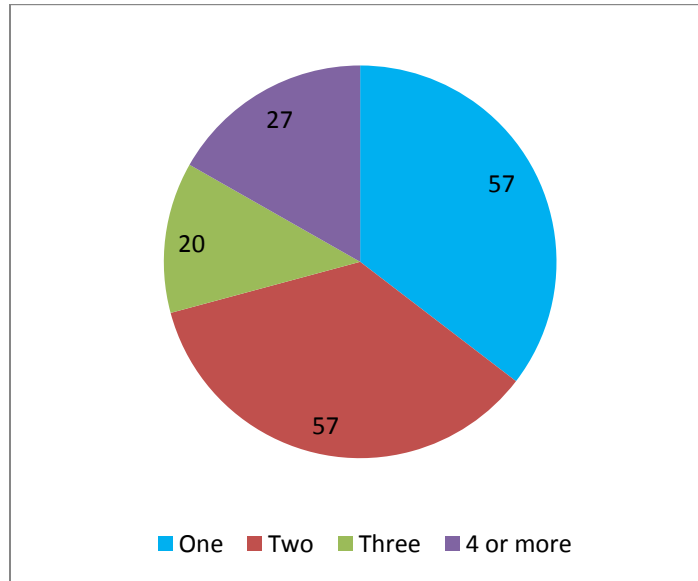
	Frequency	Percent
First Year	58	34%
Second Year	40	24%
Junior	26	15%
Senior	44	26%
No Answer	1	1%

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Behavioral Science	10	6%	Environment Studies	12	7%
Biology	7	4%	Forestry	10	6%
Business	7	4%	French	2	1%
Business Management	7	4%	General Studies	1	1%
Criminal Justice	9	5%	Nursing	52	31%
E-commerce	1	1%	Public Safety	11	7%
Education	27	16%	Undecided	6	4%
English	3	2%	University Studies	4	2%

31% of the students who indicated a major were Nursing students (the largest group, at 52 respondents), while Education had just under half as many respondents – a good reflection of the overall student population in these two majors. Other major shad noticeably fewer respondents, but the respondent mix remains a good reflection of the student mix at UMFK – see Table 1B.

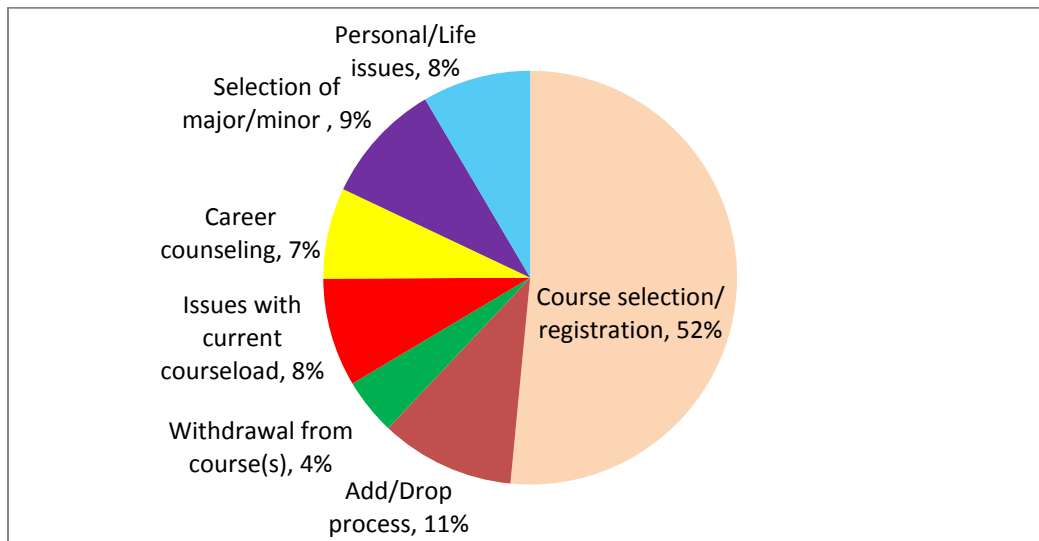
As shown in Chart 1 (below), the majority of students made one or two visits to their advisor in fall of 2009. Only 17% (n=27) of those who responded to the question made four or more visits.

**Chart 1: Number of Advisor Visits**



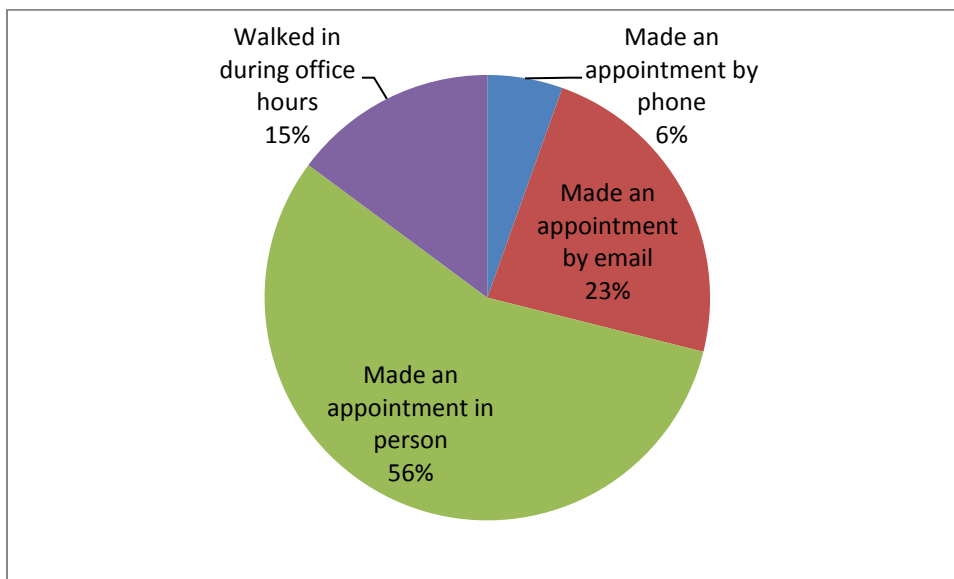
Students often have more than one reason for seeing their advisor. The questionnaire allowed students to indicate multiple reasons for advisor visits: Chart 2 shows these reasons as a percentages are of *visits*, not of respondents. The majority (52%) of all student visits were for course selection. Only 4% of visits sought help with the course withdrawal process. This suggests either that students are unwilling to tell advisors that course selection advice did not work out, or that advisors are unaware of what actually happens after advising sessions. The remainder of the visits were fairly equally spread over the remaining choices, which does infer a willingness on the part of students to seek out a broad range of guidance.

**Chart 2: Purpose of Visit**



Overall, advisors appear to be easily accessible (see Chart 3): a majority of appointments were made in person (N=72, 56% of those who responded). Advisors also appear to be easily accessible by email: 23% (N=30) of visits were arranged this way. A considerable number of visits (15%, n=19) occurred when the student simply walked into the office during 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 (71%, n=116). Only 15 students (9%) had to wait more than three days.

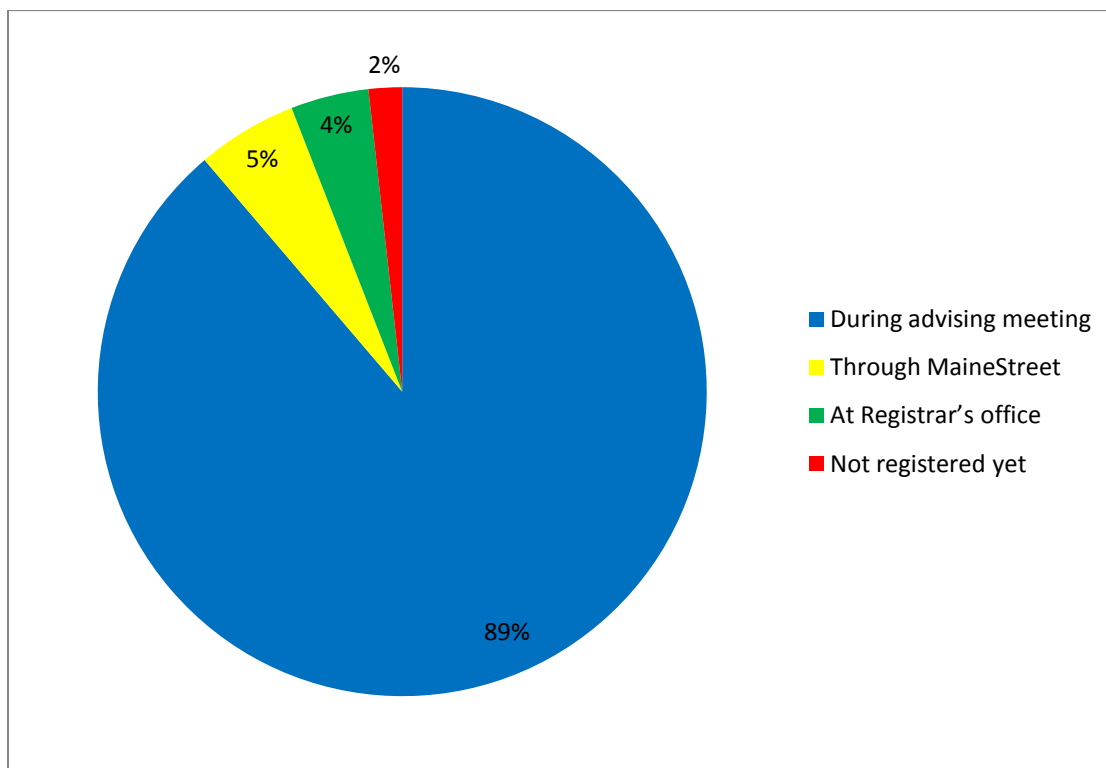
**Chart 3: How Visit Was Arranged**



### How Students Register for Classes

Almost all students (89%, n=150) were registered for classes by their advisor during their meeting (see Chart 4). In person and separate online registration seem to be most often due to the need to check requirements with other faculty or the registrar, based on student comments. This is a very large shift from last year, when online registration was first emphasized. Students and faculty have almost completely adapted to the new method.

### Chart 4: Registration Method



### Rating The Advisors

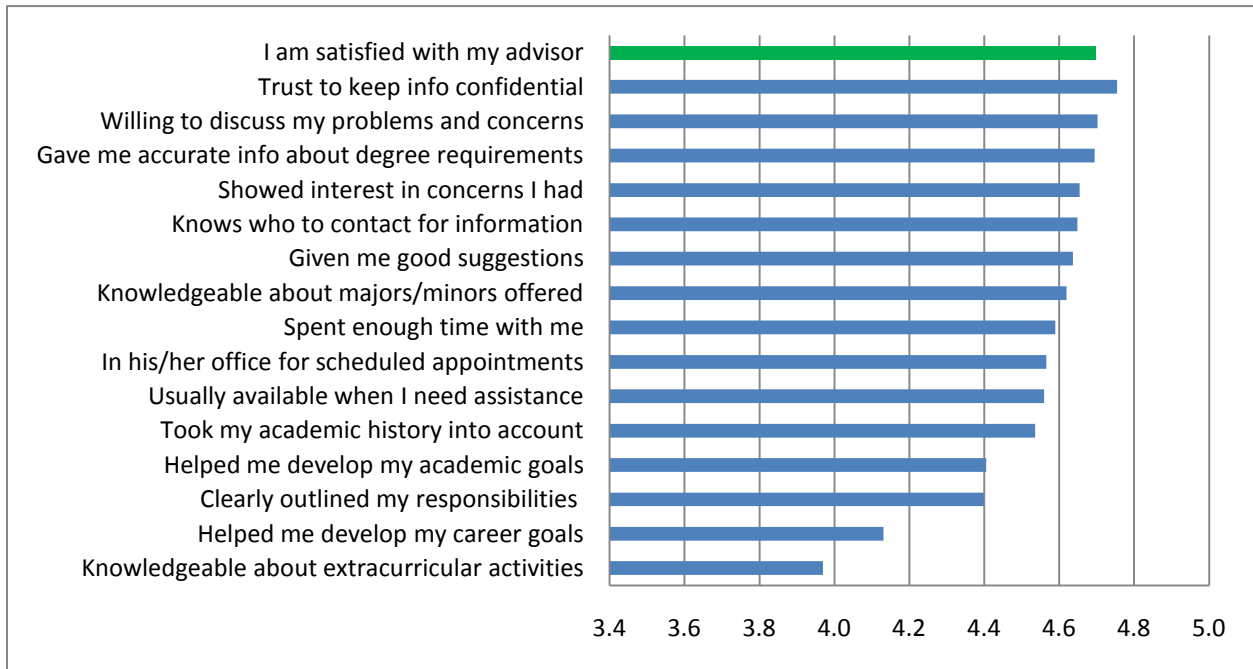
The heart of the survey is Question 7: “Please rate the following statements as they relate to your advisor and/or your advising experience”. In general, students were very pleased with their advisors: 94% (n=155) of the respondents gave a rating of 4 or higher on a five point scale in response to the statement “In general, I am satisfied with my advisor and the advising I have received”. Over 85% of respondents gave the highest possible rating (“Strongly Agree”) to their advisor in response to the statement “keeps information confidential”, and over 80% gave a rating of 5 to their advisor on “willing to discuss my problems” – a clear indication that students feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues with their advisors.

However, advisors as a group scored lower on three key items: “helped me define and develop my academic goals”; “helped me define and develop my career goals”; and “helped me understand my responsibilities”. 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. The extent of low ratings is most evident if one considers how many students rated their advisor a 3 or below on the items. This is shown in Chart 6. The problem with “career goals” is plainly evident – over 14% of respondents rated their advisor low on this item.

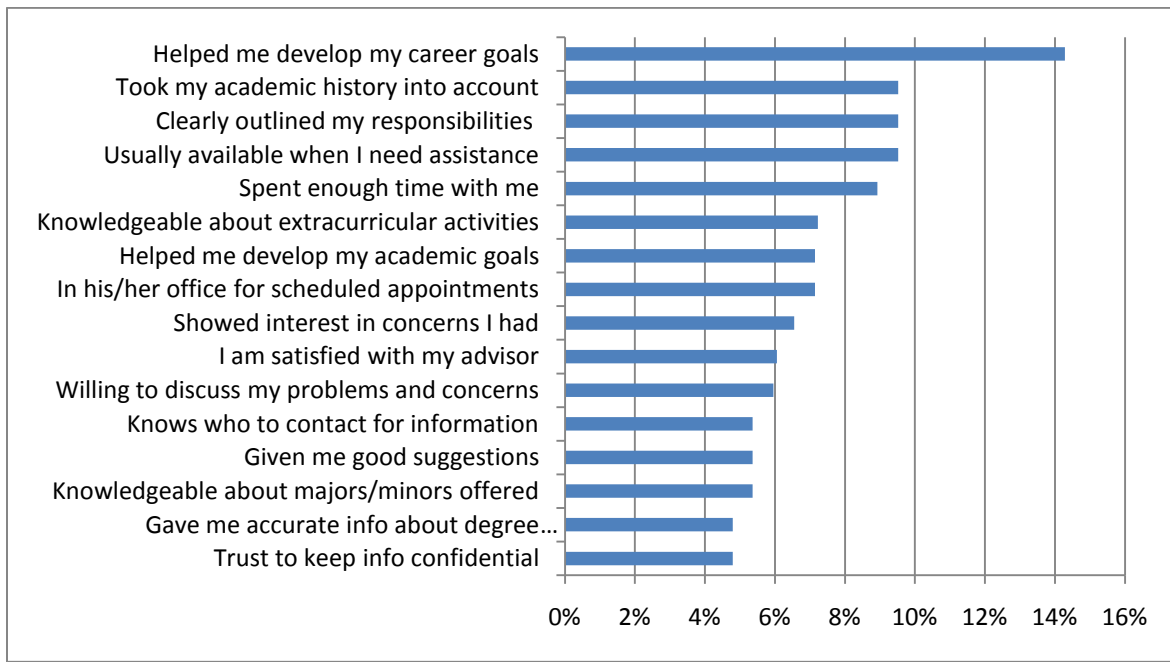
In general our advisors are rated very well, and they appear to have a good overall relationship with their advisees. The overall high opinion extends across divisions and holds for both faculty and administration advisors. However, one important group does deviate from this trend: Teacher Certification students. There were only nine respondents who self-identified as Certification students, so firm conclusions are risky. Still, the mean advisor rating from these students was 3.8, compared to 4.7 for the overall group. There were similar

differences across most of the items, especially in the key items of “helped me define and develop my academic goals” and “helped me define and develop my career goals”.

**Chart 5: Average Item Ratings**



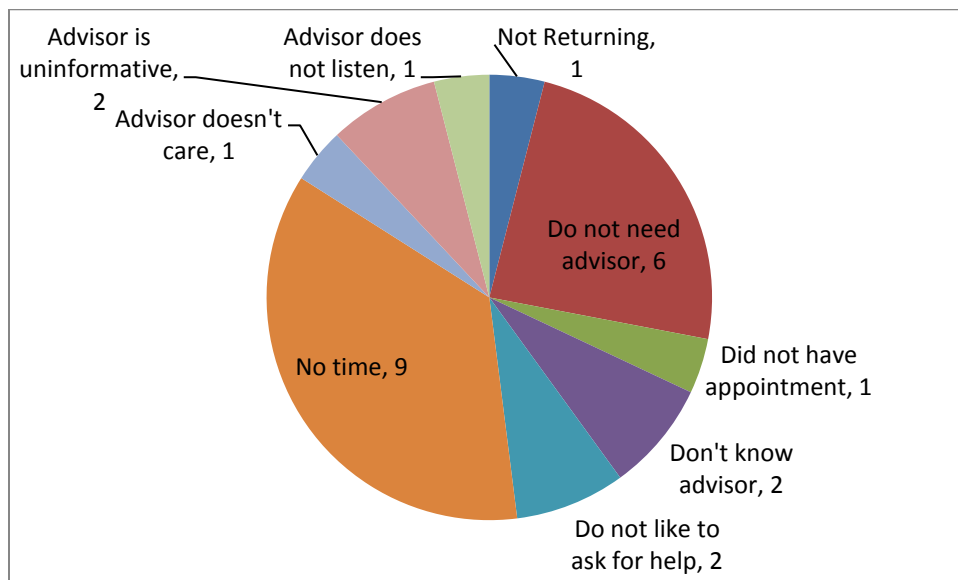
**Chart 6: Percent of Students Rating Their Advisor 3 or Less**



## Student Who Did Not See Their Advisors

As mentioned above, 25 students who responded to the questionnaire but had not seen their advisor. As shown below (see Chart 7), the majority felt that they did not need an advisor or that they did not have enough time. As might be expected from the positive advisor ratings discussed above, students who did not see their advisor rarely complained about accessibility or compatibility of their advisor. However, the 15 students who lacked time or felt no need represent almost 8% of respondents. If student advising remains a key component of retention plans, this significant minority of students would appear to be a target for greater recruitment.

**Chart 7: Reasons for Not Seeing Advisor**



## Conclusions

It is of course possible that only those students who regarded their advisors well were more likely to take the time to complete this questionnaire (in which case the evidence from Certificate students is particularly alarming). However, anecdotal evidence and the results of focus groups tend to support the broad applicability of the findings here. It continues to be evident 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, the seeming shortfall of advisors in their ability to counsel students on career and academic paths is troubling – these are held to be vital factors in the retention and success of our students. 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