The Business Model Case for Sustainable Advising Redesign:
A Senior Leadership Primer

DECEMBER 2022

AUTHORED BY rpk GROUP:

Donna M. Desrochers
Megan McGufficke

ON BEHALF OF:

The Advising Success Network (ASN)

rpk GROUP
from mission to market

AASCU American Association of State Colleges and Universities
Delivering America's Promise

THE BUSINESS MODEL CASE FOR SUSTAINABLE ADVISING REDESIGN: A SENIOR LEADERSHIP PRIMER

Brought to you by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)

In partnership with Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)

On Behalf of The Advising Success Network (ASN)

Authored by rpk GROUP

© Copyright 2022

rpk GROUP
626C Admiral Drive, Suite 511
Annapolis, MD 21401
info@rpkgroup.com
www.rpkgroup.com

American Association of State Colleges and Universities
1717 Rhode Island Avenue NW | Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
p 202.293.7070
f 202.296.5819
www.aascu.org

Questions about the publication can be directed to Jacquelyn Jones at JonesJ@aascu.org

About the Advising Success Network

THIS REPORT WAS COMMISSIONED on behalf of the Advising Success Network (ASN) — a dynamic network of five organizations who are partnering to support institutional change and improved student outcomes through a holistic approach to addressing the operational, programmatic, technological, and research needs of colleges and universities in direct support of a more equitable student experience. The ASN's mission is to help institutions build a culture of student success, with a focus on students who are Black, Indigenous and Latinx and from low-income backgrounds by identifying, building, and scaling equitable and holistic advising solutions that support all facets of the student experience. To achieve its vision of a higher education landscape that has eliminated race and income as predictors of student success, the ASN believes that a reformed approach to advising will support all students through a seamless, personalized postsecondary experience that creates better personal, academic, and professional outcomes.

Holistic advising redesign is the process of identifying, implementing, and refining high-quality, effective institutional practices that support students as they work toward achieving their personal, academic, and career goals. Recognizing that changes in advising will impact other areas of an institution, this type of redesign typically requires cross-functional collaboration and a focus on people, processes and technology. Successful holistic advising redesign promotes an institutional culture of being student-ready.

Advising as defined by the ASN encompasses more than the student interaction, but also includes the structure and operations of academic advising; the roles and responsibilities of primary-role and faculty advisors; and advising pedagogies, approaches, and models. As such, this report seeks to inform institutional leaders about the business model behind sustainable advising redesign to improve student success. The authors and partners of this report believe that material and concepts captured can help to communicate and engage with key campus stakeholders around the institutional benefits of investing in holistic advising redesign.

KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Principal Researchers & Authors: rpk GROUP
Donna M. Desrochers, Senior Associate
Megan McGufficke, Consultant

Project Administrators: American Association of State Colleges and Universities
Dr. Jacquelyn Jones, Assistant Vice President for Student Success
Melissa Welker, Director, Student Success and Advising Partnerships
Shannon Looney, Senior Strategist & Consultant

Contents

5 Overview

9 A Primer: Sustainable Student Success

11 The Business Model Behind Advising Redesign

13 Creating a Sustainable Business Model with an ROI Perspective

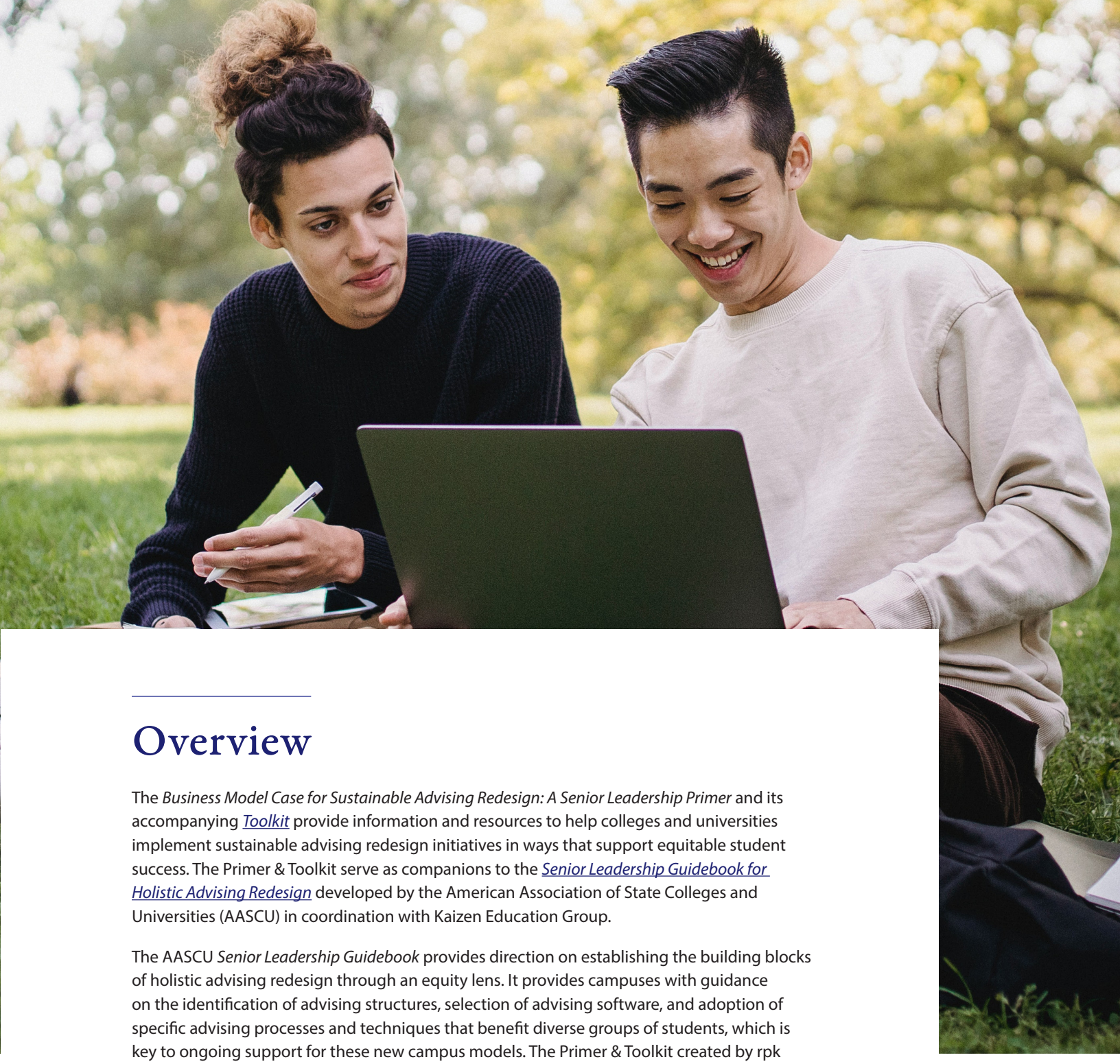
14 A Sustainability Framework for Holistic Advising Redesign

17 Assessing Institutional Readiness

18 Creating a Sustainable Advising Business Model

19 Appendix – Institutional Readiness Assessment for Senior Leadership

22 References



Overview

The *Business Model Case for Sustainable Advising Redesign: A Senior Leadership Primer* and its accompanying *Toolkit* provide information and resources to help colleges and universities implement sustainable advising redesign initiatives in ways that support equitable student success. The Primer & Toolkit serve as companions to the *Senior Leadership Guidebook for Holistic Advising Redesign* developed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) in coordination with Kaizen Education Group.

The AASCU *Senior Leadership Guidebook* provides direction on establishing the building blocks of holistic advising redesign through an equity lens. It provides campuses with guidance on the identification of advising structures, selection of advising software, and adoption of specific advising processes and techniques that benefit diverse groups of students, which is key to ongoing support for these new campus models. The Primer & Toolkit created by rpk GROUP build upon AASCU's initial work, offering a framework and resources to support the implementation and operation of equitable advising activities from a sustainability viewpoint.

The sustainable advising redesign resources are organized into two parts with distinct purposes and audiences:

THE PRIMER PRESENTS A HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW OF THE BUSINESS MODEL CASE for investing in equitable holistic advising redesign through a return on investment (ROI) perspective.

The associated **TOOLKIT EXPANDS UPON THE PRIMER AND PROVIDES ACTIONABLE STEPS AND ARTIFACTS** to execute an effective resourcing and sustainability strategy.

The Primer & Toolkit build upon the Advising Sustainability Framework first presented in the AASCU *Senior Leadership Guidebook*. The Toolkit that accompanies this Primer is organized around the Framework's four dimensions of sustainability:

1. Strategic Vision and Processes
2. People and Staffing
3. Data, Analytics, and Technological Resources
4. Fiscal Resources

The Toolkit assists campuses with implementation of the concepts described in the Primer. It supports campuses' creation of more sustainable and equitable advising and resourcing strategies to narrow or reduce opportunity gaps for different groups of students. It contains sustainability planning tools, including rubrics and checklists, and a financial model that campus advising leaders can populate to determine resourcing requirements, estimate ROI, and assess financial sustainability. It also includes several case studies that highlight different aspects and approaches to sustainability, and a sample use case illustrating how to use and interpret the Toolkit artifacts.

WHO SHOULD USE THE PRIMER?	WHO SHOULD USE THE TOOLKIT?
The Primer is designed for the senior leadership team and stakeholders in the higher education landscape. Presidents, provosts, and senior-level cabinet members engaged in the creation and implementation of strategy can **use the Primer to understand the business case for advising redesign.**	**The Toolkit is intended for senior- and mid-level administrative staff** to operationalize sustainable advising redesign at the direction of senior executive leadership. **Administrative staff can use the Toolkit to inform their approach to sustainable advising redesign:** • Student success administrators, including directors and associate directors of advising. • Academic affairs and business office administrators, including Deans or chief financial officers • Other staff involved in day-to-day advising operations.

How to Use the Primer & Toolkit

Advising does not involve a one-size-fits-all approach and neither does sustainability. Senior leadership can use the high-level concepts and Framework presented in the Primer to build a case for advising redesign across campus constituencies and identify their role in championing and supporting the work as it progresses. The return on investment from advising is a key feature in communicating and storytelling around student success — not only within the campus, but importantly to the Board of Trustees and others with influence and power outside of campus.

The Toolkit can be used to support a variety of advising redesigns because the sustainability Framework is robust across distinct approaches and institutions. The Framework elements are flexible and customizable and may look different across institutions in their application and implementation. The Toolkit resources support holistic advising redesign but are equally useful in supporting more limited advising redesign efforts. Campus leaders can use the Toolkit artifacts to plan and implement advising redesign in ways that are operationally and financially sustainable in their context.

Colleges and universities that use the Senior Leadership Primer & Toolkit in conjunction with a strategic advising redesign plan are positioned to implement initiatives that can sustain beyond the limited timeframes for external funding. Together, the Primer & Toolkit offer comprehensive guidance to accelerate the sustainability planning and implementation processes for campus advising redesign initiatives.

Key Terminology

Several key terms support understanding of the Primer:

Advising:

A critical component of student success and a 'bright star' in the integrated constellation of student supports at an institution. The advisor-advisee relationship supports students as they identify and attain their academic, career, and personal goals. The Advising Success Network defines 'advising' as encompassing more than the student interaction; it also involves the structure and operations of academic advising, the roles and responsibilities of primary-role and faculty advisors, and advising pedagogies, approaches, and models.

Business model:

An institutional strategy that centers on an understanding of its cost drivers and revenue centers and how they connect to institutional mission and generate net revenue.

Financial sustainability:

Generating positive net revenue to reinvest in existing or new campus initiatives. Financial sustainability requires careful consideration and continuous adaptation of the business model to support ongoing campus operations.

Holistic advising redesign:

The process of identifying, implementing, and refining high-quality, effective institutional practices that support students as they work toward achieving their personal, academic, and career goals. Recognizing that changes in advising will impact other areas of an institution, this type of redesign typically requires cross-functional collaboration and a focus on people, processes, and technology. Successful holistic advising redesign promotes an institutional culture of being student-ready.

Net revenue:

Total revenues minus total expenses; when revenues exceed expenses, an initiative generates 'positive net revenue.'

Return on investment (ROI):

The financial and/or non-financial benefits from an investment in relation to that investment's cost.

ROI perspective:

Applying a financial lens to allocate campus resources in ways that maintain quality, improve student success, and generate additional net revenue.

Sustainability:

The ability to develop and integrate capacities, policies, processes, and funding sources to support ongoing operations beyond the 'startup' or launch phase.

Sustainable student success:

Operationalizing student success initiatives, such as those encompassed in holistic advising approaches, with the necessary infrastructure, resources, and culture so that they become woven into the campus ecosystem.

The definitions for 'Holistic advising redesign' and 'Advising' are adapted from AASCU's Senior Leadership Guidebook for Holistic Advising Redesign.

A Primer: Sustainable Student Success

Colleges and universities investing in holistic advising redesign benefit from considering the business model throughout the process of planning and implementing strategy.

Many colleges do not routinely apply a business model lens to their student success investment decisions. But understanding the costs and benefits to students and the institution alongside the financial implications of equitable student success are all critical to the planning process.

Decisions around holistic advising redesign can require significant investment of institutional resources. Those investments include time for planning, implementation, and training, and often new investments in technology. It is critical for institutional leaders to consider how these investments could impact their institution's overall business model before making critical resource allocation decisions.

Investments in student success are motivated by a variety of reasons beyond goodwill toward students. Institutions seeking to improve student outcomes through holistic advising redesign also may intend to:

- Improve student-level momentum metrics around retention, persistence, and course taking.
- Reduce equity gaps by expanding student opportunities and providing supports for unmet needs.
- Address staffing capacity issues to allow for more intrusive and intentional advising.
- Integrate disparate services in ways that are more accessible to students and more efficient for institutions.

When deciding upon a course of action to improve student success, institutional leaders are compelled to evaluate and prioritize initiatives that best support student and institutional outcomes. Applying a financial lens to clarify the resources required, including time, costs and revenue streams, can aid in the design, creation, and implementation of sustainable advising redesign. This lens can also inform discussions around which activities to prioritize when resources are limited, and how best to allocate those resources to accommodate the unique needs and experiences of different students, including those who may be first-generation, low-income, adults, and/or Black , Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC).

Leaders who seek to improve student success can advance their efforts by recognizing three truths:

STUDENT SUCCESS IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AND BUSINESS MODEL. Student success is at the core of the institutional mission but is not often connected back to the business model of the institution. While it may initially seem uncomfortable to connect student success with financial returns, it is critical to ensuring a healthy business model and long-term stability. Making that same connection between equity and the business model is equally important as it may reveal misalignment with the institutional mission and unrealized financial gains from persistent gaps in student opportunity and outcomes.

WHAT'S GOOD FOR STUDENTS IS ALSO GOOD FOR INSTITUTIONS. Most students receive a positive return on their investment from earning a college degree.[1] Maximizing degree completion requires intentionally understanding and allocating resources and support to ensure that all students—and especially those historically excluded from advising systems and supports—are better served. Improvements in student persistence and retention are the same measures that drive increases in institutional revenues as students re-enroll and pay tuition and fees. Institutions do not face a choice between student success and financial sustainability; they often work together in a complementary fashion.

FINANCIAL SUCCESS CAN BEGET STUDENT SUCCESS. When institutions generate additional revenues—or reduce costs through efficiency improvements—they can unlock resources to reinvest in existing student success initiatives, or fund new ones. Financial sustainability is not just about the bottom line. An institution with a sustainable business model is well positioned to continue providing equitable academic opportunities for current and future students.

Investing in initiatives that benefit students makes good financial sense for institutions. Yet even student success initiatives that are not financially advantageous may remain worthwhile investments. For instance, it's challenging to determine the financial impact of campus food pantries or clothes closets through student persistence and retention, yet such services are important components of an equity-minded holistic student support model. Some initiatives may be critical to the institutional mission, to certain student populations, or to the identity of a college or university even if they are not self-supporting. Applying a business model lens does not mean forgoing activities that fail to generate a positive financial return. Rather, it reflects informed decision-making around the best allocation of institutional resources.

1. Abel & Dietz, 2019.

Connecting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to Sustainability

Improving student success outcomes for diverse groups of students is good for students, society, and institutions. When investing in holistic advising redesign, the creation and implementation of strategy involves evaluating the specific investments that may be necessary to support specific student groups such as first-generation, low-income, and/or BIPOC learners. Recognizing and committing to eliminate gaps in persistence, retention, and completion among diverse groups of students advances equity and is economically advantageous.

Colleges and universities may need to provide a variety of supports for students to persist and succeed, especially for students who are historically disenfranchised by higher education systems. In a holistic business model framework, the portfolio of services offered collectively contributes to the institution's bottom line through improved student success even though each individual initiative may contribute differently. Ultimately, success for diverse groups of students is a fundamental component of the business model. An institution that is only able to produce successful outcomes for certain student populations will have a difficult time justifying and attaining long-term sustainability of its chosen advising and support model.

The Business Model Behind Advising Redesign

An understanding of the business model positions institutional leaders to prioritize decisions that best support desired student success outcomes and institutional mission. Applying a business model lens requires evaluating upfront and ongoing costs of different student success strategies while also identifying the financial benefits of investing in new initiatives expected to change student behavior, such as redesigned advising models.

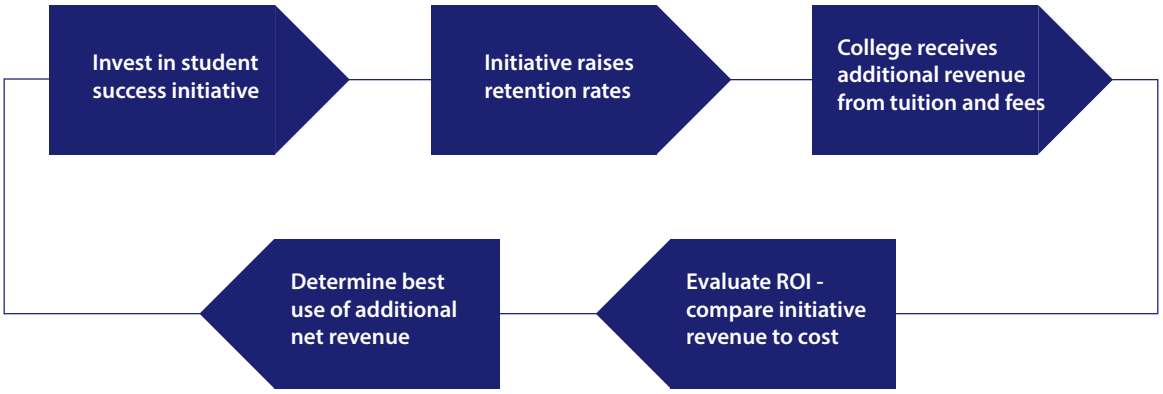
Higher education research has demonstrated a correlation between effective academic advising and improved student retention.[2] Academic advising improves students' satisfaction with their college experience and provides effective education guidance that positively influences retention rates.[3] And a strategically implemented advising redesign initiative has the potential to increase student retention.[4]

The potential business model impacts from investing in a new student advising model are illustrated in Figure 1. If an investment in student advising is expected to raise retention rates, the additional tuition and fee revenue generated from those retained students can be estimated during the planning process. Beyond financial gains, targeted advising reforms that improve retention rates among marginalized student groups may also align with an institution's mission and equity goals.

Using the business model lens, colleges and universities can weigh the expected revenue gains against the cost (the return on investment). Earned revenue may recoup the full or partial cost of advising redesign, or potentially generate additional net revenue. That net revenue could be invested back into advising or into other activities supporting the institutional mission and equity goals.

2. Nutt, 2003.
3. Cueso, 2003.
4. Linderman & Kolenovic, 2013.

Figure 1: Student Retention & the Business Model



Evaluating the net revenue associated with a new approach to advising helps leaders understand the returns that the institution can expect from each dollar spent. Allocating resources toward initiatives that improve student outcomes and generate the highest net revenue returns fosters financial sustainability. **The business model lens pushes leaders to think beyond the price tag of student success initiatives and consider long term fiscal implications.**

Advising redesign can also be financially beneficial to students:

Students with access to high quality advising may be able to effectively navigate graduation requirements and reduce the time and cost to obtain a credential. Removing inequities in access to high quality advising may narrow outcomes gaps among different types of students (e.g., low-income, transfers, first-generation, and BIPOC).

Early and sustained guidance could help students avoid enrolling in or retaking unnecessary courses. Information on degree requirements and the resources available to help students successfully complete their courses can reduce unproductive enrollment and the additional costs that accompany it.

Strengthening policies and guidance on college entry and exit pathways could help students achieve their academic goals at lower cost. Advising resource models should consider the various pathways students take both into and out of institutions, including traditional and reverse transfers, dual enrollment, non-credit to for-credit student transfers, and credit for prior learning programs. Recognizing the value of prior or transcripted learning and prioritizing support for students can eliminate multiple payments to credential the same learning.

These same outcomes can also benefit institutions. Although some outcomes reduce incoming tuition and fees, they also create institutional efficiencies. **Reducing excess time and credits to a degree and certifying knowledge that students learned elsewhere enables colleges to redirect resources spent on those activities (e.g., offering additional course sections) to other institutional priorities.** The financial benefit to institutions from alternative student enrollment pathways and programs can outweigh their cost.[5]

5. Desrochers, 2021.

Creating a Sustainable Business Model with an ROI Perspective

Pursuing a holistic advising redesign usually requires an upfront investment, much of which reflects time spent on planning and implementation. The initial implementation is often rolled out and revised over several years, so full implementation and operation may not occur for three to five years. Adopting an ROI perspective encourages institutional leaders to consider financial implications beyond the upfront price tag of holistic advising redesign. In doing so, institutions can shift their thinking from "What does this cost?" to "What do we get for the resources we spend?"

When cost is the only consideration, institutions may forgo an initiative with a higher price tag that produces more equitable student success outcomes and generates more revenue. Colleges and universities that consider the return on each dollar spent are better positioned to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and equitably.

Transitioning to an ROI perspective requires three major shifts:

1. ***Develop a holistic understanding of advising resources:*** Increase awareness of resource availability and utilization, with a focus on how people spend their time, including, for example, the proportion of time faculty advisors spend on advising versus instruction, or the time that professional advisors spend on course registrations versus degree planning with students.

2. ***Focus on unit cost:*** Shift from a focus on the total cost of an advising initiative to a relative cost metric such as 'cost per student served.'
3. ***Connect student success, equity and financial sustainability:*** Use diverse communication strategies, including storytelling, to show the connection between improvements in equitable student outcomes and institutional financial benefits.

College and universities implementing holistic advising redesign benefit when select student and financial metrics align with the interests of multiple stakeholders. Campus leadership can identify key student success metrics and definitions for equitable student success, and simultaneously identify key financial metrics to provide additional context. Tracking these metrics over time provides a foundation for data-informed decisions.

Institutional leaders can use metrics to set ambitious yet attainable goals—including reductions in equity gaps—and track progress toward those targets. Campuses gain a better understanding of their data though disaggregated lenses and are also equipped to set ambitious and equitable targets that enable more intentional and equitable design decisions around staffing, technology, and other program features.

When pursuing financial sustainability, creating an advising redesign plan that is not dependent on future unsecured funding is the preferred approach. Philanthropic funding is advantageous during the initial redesign stage but is not reliable for funding ongoing operations. **As colleges and universities gain a better understanding of their current resource allocations, advising costs, and revenue drivers, they can create the structures and processes that contribute to a sustainable and equitable advising redesign initiative.**

A Sustainability Framework for Holistic Advising Redesign

The AASCU *Senior Leadership Guidebook* establishes an Advising Sustainability Framework to guide academic advising operations, providing a broad overview of planning for long-term sustainability (see Figure 2). This Primer provides a brief overview of the four sustainability dimensions, while the Toolkit provides actionable steps to implement strategies and solutions that drive lasting impact.

Figure 2: Advising Sustainability Framework

Strategic Vision and Processes

A successful advising redesign requires that colleges and universities identify a clear strategic vision and well-defined processes for implementation and operations. Connecting student success and equity to financial sustainability is a critical component of an institution's communication process. Student success initiative leaders are charged with structuring frequent, clear communication about the business model, financial sustainability, levers impacting sustainability, and areas of necessary restructuring. Senior leadership is ultimately responsible for ensuring that strategically defined processes drive a culture of sustainable student success and equity.

Senior leadership is ultimately responsible for ensuring that strategically defined processes drive a culture of sustainable student success and equity.

Senior leaders' initial action to sustain advising redesign efforts on college campuses is to establish strategic priorities that signal a commitment to the initiative and equity. Sustainability is more than just numbers or dollars. Sustainability requires building infrastructure that sets up new initiatives for future success. Reducing potential challenges or barriers to success through thoughtful planning and implementation best positions holistic advising redesign to produce intended outcomes. Nevertheless, money talks. And leadership should voice a clear vision as well as a demonstrated commitment to equity by directing resources to support an equity-centered advising strategy.

People and Staffing

Effective advising requires appropriate staffing levels and ensuring that the allocation of staff and their time aligns with advising priorities. Advising redesign plans do not always require hiring additional advisors but may include re-envisioning the ways in which advisors prioritize and allocate their time. Technology is now available to perform many routine advising tasks, allowing advisors to apply their skills to more productive activities.

Institutional leaders may consider reviewing the organizational structure of different units that contribute to holistic student advising. Opportunities to reorganize and reallocate staff and time to support institutional priorities could be realized. The staff and skills required during the advising redesign and implementation phase often shift after the new structure is operational.

Investing in professional development is also a critical component of sustainability, ensuring that professional and faculty advisors are well prepared to assist students. This includes ensuring that new advising structures and the roles and responsibilities within those structures are clear. Advisors must also be well-informed about new policies and procedures and trained on new technologies. Training should cultivate an equity-minded approach to advising and understanding students' experiences in order to provide appropriate holistic support services.

Data, Analytics, & Technological Resources

Data and analytics are critical components of sustainable student success initiatives. Institution leaders are responsible for identifying and prioritizing key student success and financial outcome metrics for analysis. It is recommended that data utilization capacity be assessed prior to project kickoff. Implementation of appropriate technology platforms can help institutions scale, measure, and support advising redesign across campuses.

Technology and data analytics are increasingly used to identify students who may be at risk of falling off their degree pathway. These tools can be helpful in the early identification and outreach to students. But campuses should also be mindful of how biases and assumptions may factor into—or be embedded within—the use and interpretation of analytics. These biases and assumptions could reinforce existing patterns, stereotypes, and advising approaches that are ineffective for many students.

Like communication strategies, data and analytics are not a singular activity in time. **Well-designed programs will monitor metrics at pre-determined intervals and use the information in their decision making.** Metrics indicate whether the anticipated vision and student success goals are on track or whether strategies need to be adjusted to meet initial objectives.

Fiscal Resources

A sustainable business model relies on smart use of resources. An advising redesign may introduce new costs or require a reallocation of existing resources. Identifying existing revenue streams and areas for potential new net revenue is critical to evaluating an institution's ability to cover such costs.

Senior advising or student success leaders are responsible for monitoring and communicating financial metrics, such as cost drivers and the cost per student served, to aid in data-driven decision making.

Many leaders whose advocation is supporting student success strategies are understandably uncomfortable with 'monetizing' the impact of these initiatives. But financial transparency can help identify areas that are underfunded and therefore not as effective as they could be, or more costly than needed because the campus hasn't invested in technology or redesigning processes to make them more efficient. Financial metrics are not merely performance metrics; they are diagnostic metrics to help improve operations and equitable student outcomes.

An ROI approach works best when institutional leaders are ready and able to adopt data-informed decision making. Additional analytical capacity may need to be developed before implementing sustainable advising redesign. The campus chief financial officer or other business office staff may be best positioned to support advising redesign staff in developing their financial capacities and the translation of financial information for campus leaders. Producing data and metrics is often quite straightforward, but it's the interpretation and storytelling around the data that lead to information that is actionable rather than merely compliant.

The Toolkit includes a financial model to support implementation in ways that promote sustainable management of fiscal resources and key metrics. The financial model assists in answering key business model questions:

How much does the initiative cost?
- *What are the cost drivers?*

What's the potential ROI?
- *What levers can be adjusted to increase the ROI?*

Is the initiative financially sustainable?
- *What sources of funding/revenue are available to sustain it?*

Assessing Institutional Readiness

Assessing institutional readiness is a critical part of sustaining a holistic advising redesign initiative. A good starting place for campus leaders is to assess their capacity to implement the operational strategies outlined in AASCU's *Senior Leadership Guidebook*. Leaders should also begin with a strong understanding of the deficiencies in the current advising system, particularly through an equity lens, and a commitment to alleviating the barriers contributing to those outcomes. The **Institutional Readiness Assessment for Senior Leadership in this Primer** (see Appendix) aligns with the Toolkit's focus on assessing and developing the capacity to integrate an ROI perspective that promotes sustainability.

Applying a business model lens to advising may be new to some institutions but evaluating their campus's capacity to commit to new strategic and operational approaches is foundational to the planning process. Evaluating current institutional capacity requires honest self-assessment, which depends upon a culture of trust. Constructive self-assessment necessitates supportive leadership who encourage transparency and constructive—even if critical—feedback. This process can be easily derailed by a culture that has either previously retaliated against this sense of honest reflection or lacks incentives for truthfulness.

After reviewing the Primer, senior leaders may complete the Institutional Readiness Assessment for Senior Leadership to evaluate their institution's readiness level and implement the recommended course of action. Identifying appropriate starting steps that correspond to an institution's readiness level can lead to more sustainable outcomes.

Creating a Sustainable Advising Business Model

This Primer lays the groundwork for colleges and universities incorporating a business model approach as they consider investing and planning toward a holistic advising redesign. Measuring the costs and benefits to both students *and* the institution can lead to more informed resource allocation decisions. Pinpointing specific strategies and actions that support successful attainment of strategic goals and initiatives and generate positive return for all stakeholders can be achieved by adopting the business model lens. When colleges and universities gain an increased understanding of advising costs and revenue drivers, they can better structure business models that contribute to a successful and sustainable advising redesign while enabling intentional resourcing decisions that consider equity.

Colleges and universities motivated to move to action can reference the accompanying *Toolkit* for additional guidance and support. At its core, the Toolkit includes a financial model to help institutional teams to understand the resource requirements and potential return from their investment in advising redesign. But fiscal resources are just one aspect of sustainability. The Toolkit provides information, checklists, and worksheets across all four dimensions of the Advising Sustainability Framework to guide senior- and mid-level administrators in their advising redesign efforts, and to create an equity-focused redesign plan that reinforces the vision and goals supported by campus leadership.

APPENDIX – Institutional Readiness Assessment for Senior Leadership

SENIOR LEADERSHIP MAY USE THE FOLLOWING TOOL TO ASSESS INSTITUTIONAL READINESS. Once a baseline readiness level is established, institutions can identify strengths and areas of opportunity as they move forward with their sustainable advising redesign.

Assessment Rubric Instructions

Table A1 shows the Institutional Readiness Assessment for Senior Leadership. The rubric assesses different aspects of the four Advising Sustainability Framework dimensions. For each dimension, indicate whether your institution demonstrates 'No evidence,' 'Limited evidence,' 'Moderate evidence,' or 'Strong evidence' of the statement listed in the left most column of the rubric.

TABLE A1: INSTITUTIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT FOR SENIOR LEADERSHIP

	NO EVIDENCE	LIMITED EVIDENCE	MODERATE EVIDENCE	STRONG EVIDENCE
STRATEGIC VISION				
1.1 Senior leadership (defined as president, and president's cabinet) clearly understand the elements of the advising business model (i.e., spending, revenues, the outcomes produced and its connection to revenue generation (ROI)).	○	○	○	○
1.2 Leadership understands the sustainability of the advising business model, and the levers impacting sustainability.	○	○	○	○
1.3 There is a willingness to engage stakeholders in the current advising business model, despite the likelihood of initial hesitation and the possibility of active resistance to change.	○	○	○	○
1.4 Student Affairs leadership regularly communicates about the advising model, its sustainability, the levers impacting that sustainability, and areas of needed renewal/restructuring, and equity considerations.	○	○	○	○
1.5 Feedback loops are in place to receive feedback from multiple institutional stakeholders, allowing for a free flow of information related to advising and its business model.	○	○	○	○

	NO EVIDENCE	LIMITED EVIDENCE	MODERATE EVIDENCE	STRONG EVIDENCE
PEOPLE & STAFFING				
2.1 Advisors understand the connection between student success outcomes, equity, and the institutional business model.	○	○	○	○
2.2 Training is available to expose advising stakeholders to an ROI perspective on student success.	○	○	○	○
2.3 Advising roles and responsibilities reflect an equity and ROI perspective in daily decision making.	○	○	○	○
DATA, ANALYTICS & TECHNOLOGY				
3.1 The institution has established clear student success goals for the institution and student subgroups, including traditionally underserved.	○	○	○	○
3.2 Best practice approaches for collecting and utilizing advising data have been identified and implemented.	○	○	○	○
3.3 The institution has established technologies (e.g., learning management systems, software for advising, course registration, degree planning, and/or retention-tracking) to provide student advising support efficiently and effectively.	○	○	○	○
FISCAL RESOURCES				
4.1 Leadership is aware of alternatives to traditional advising models and the ability of those models to move the institution toward greater financial sustainability and equitable student outcomes.	○	○	○	○
4.2 Components of the advising business model that are financially unsustainable are identified for investment and renewal/restructuring.	○	○	○	○
4.3 Performance metrics have been created that clearly connect to institutional mission, strategy and the achievement of a sustainable business model.	○	○	○	○
4.4 The institution continuously monitors those metrics and targets and makes course correction as needed.	○	○	○	○

Scoring Rubric Instructions

Based on the responses to the assessment above, colleges and universities can use the guidelines in Table A2 to determine their readiness level and recommended course of action in embarking on the activities described in the Toolkit.

TABLE A2: INSTITUTIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT SCORING RUBRIC

SELF-ASSESSMENT RESPONSES	READINESS LEVEL	COURSE OF ACTION
Mostly 'No evidence'	Developing	• Commit extensive time to the planning stage • Before project launch, ensure project receives exposure across the institution through frequent and clear communication
Mostly 'Limited evidence'	Emergent	• Commit significant time to the planning stage • Before project launch, invest in technology and structure assessment
Mostly 'Moderate evidence'	Intermediate	• Spend moderate time in the planning stage • Before project launch, invest in building staff capacity
Mostly 'Strong evidence'	Advanced	• Engage in the institution's typical planning process • Institution is ready to more quickly enter the implementation process

References

Abel, J.R. & Deitz, R. (2019, June 5). *Despite Rising Costs, College is Still a Good Investment.* Federal Reserve Bank of New York. https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2019/06/despite-rising-costs-college-is-still-a-good-investment/.

American Association of State College and Universities (AASCU). (2021). *Senior Leadership Guidebook for Holistic Advising Redesign*. https://www.aascu.org/uploadedFiles/AASCU/Content/Root/AcademicAffairsPrograms/AASCU_ASN_Senior_Leadership_Guidebook.pdf

Cueso, J. (2003). Academic Advisement and Student Retention: Empirical Connections & Systemic Interventions. https://www.shawnee.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/Academic-advisementv-and-student-retention.pdf

Desrochers, D.M. (2021). *The Business Model Behind New 'Recognition of Non-institutional Learning Models.* rpk GROUP. https://rpkgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/rpk-GROUP-Recognition-of-Non-institutional-Learning-Business-Models.pdf

Linderman D. & Kolenovic Z. (2013). Moving the Completion Needle at Community Colleges: CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 45(5),* 43-50. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1023720.

Nutt, C.L. (2003). *Academic Advising and Student Retention and Persistence*. NACADA Clearinghouse. https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-and-Student-Retention-article.aspx.

Credit: Utah Tech University

rpk GROUP
from mission to market

AASCU American Association of State Colleges and Universities
Delivering America's Promise

www.AASCU.org
www.rpkgroup.org