

Advising at Bennington College is meant to

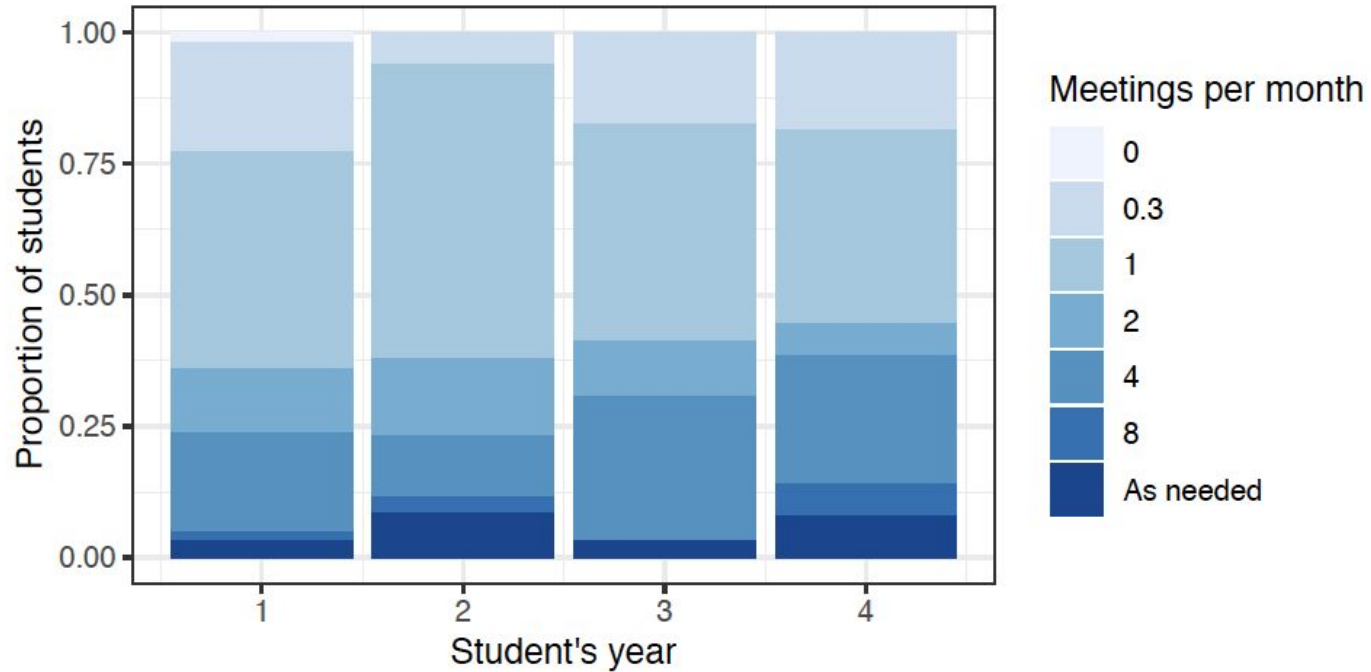
1. Support students in their intellectual discovery and growth, and in the development of an ongoing reflective practice.
2. Assist students with the development and execution of their plans of study.
3. Help students navigate the curriculum, FWT, and other academic resources and opportunities at the College.
4. Recognize the whole student experience, helping students to integrate their learning, and to assess their progress in developing Capacities, across these experiences.
5. Provide students with mentorship, connection, and guidance for accessing relevant campus resources to support them in all areas of their experience at Bennington and beyond so that they might thrive academically.

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Why have we been working on improving advising?

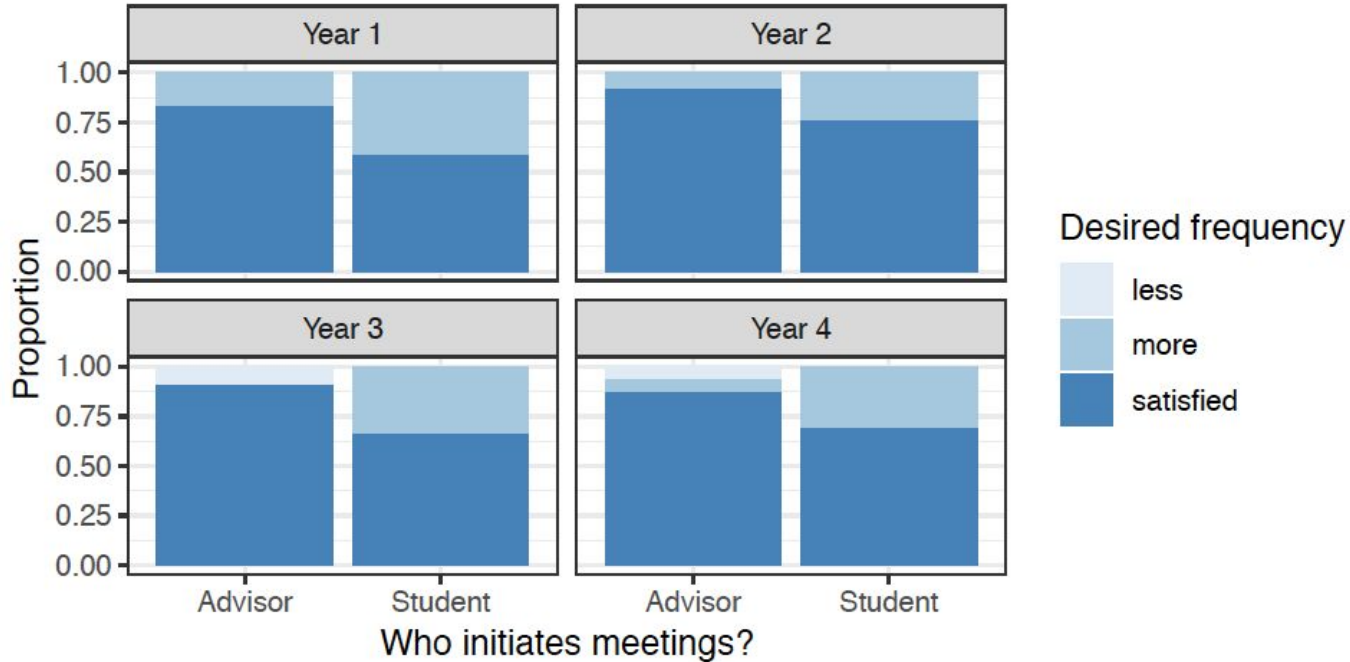
- Mentorship through advising is central to Bennington's student-centered educational model
 - Helps more students successfully navigate and fully benefit from the Plan process
- In conversations with faculty and students, the Mellon Fellows heard that there was significant room to make improvements to advising and that this would help strengthen the Plan process and improve learning.
 - Training and support for new faculty
 - More time for advising first-year students
 - Structured support for third term students proposing plans
 - Access to important information
- Advising and mentoring is what sets us apart from our peer institutions

Data from advising from Spring 2015 survey

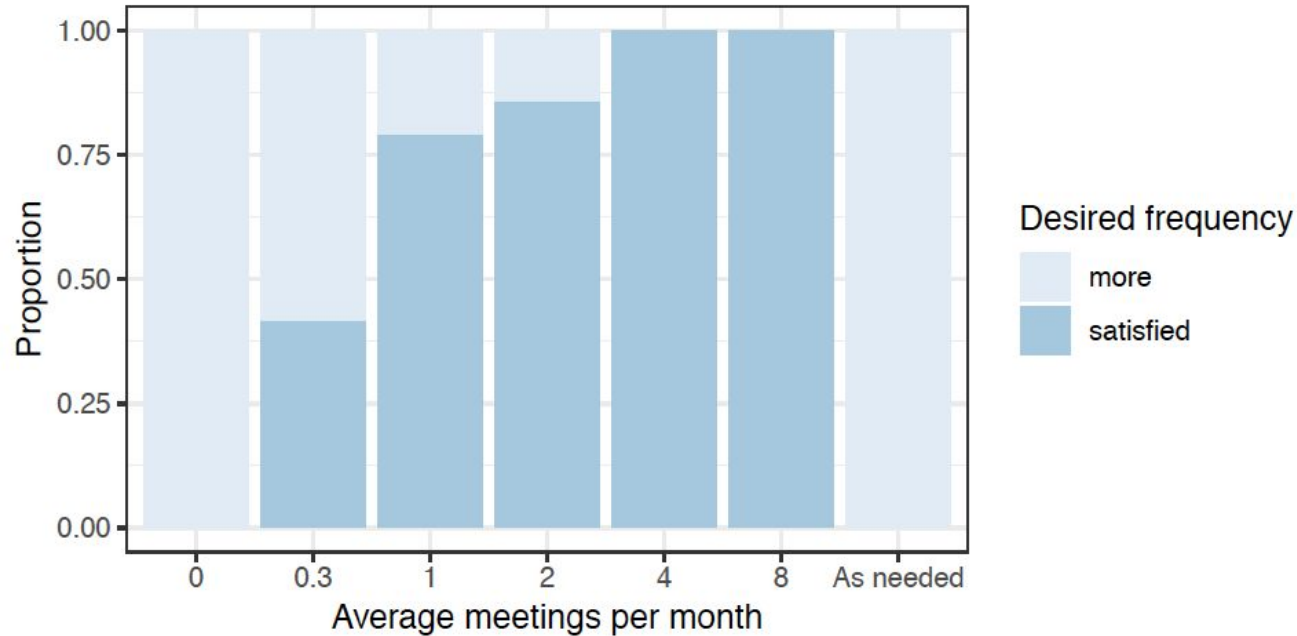


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Data from advising from Spring 2015 survey



Data from advising from Spring 2015 survey: First Year Students only



Our students are changing

- Generational shifts
 - Delayed maturity
 - Decreased interpersonal skills
 - Increased frequency of depression and anxiety
- Demographic shifts
 - We have more students who likely do not have parents telling them how to navigate college and advocate for themselves and who frequently struggle while navigating our self-directed, individualized educational model
- Retention group insights
 - Our work this year shifted to really looking at the medical withdrawals closely and working with admissions to start to identify students who are not yet ready to be accepted

First-Year Forum: An evolving structure

Initial two year pilot:

- Focus: To help incoming students adapt to their college experience and prepare them for success at Bennington and in the Plan process
- Highlights
 - Improved one-on-one faculty advising
 - Group approach brought out struggles students were having more clearly
 - Co-leaders were a key element to the success
 - Creative approaches to getting students to more deeply engaged with advising elements as really learning moments
 - All first-year students are now included
- Lessons learned
 - We were trying to do too much

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The new First-Year Forum

- **Main focus:** helping students navigate the first year, establish relationships with faculty, staff, student groups, and the larger community, and understand and prepare for the Plan process.
- **Structure:** Combination of group advising 1 hour/week and individually chosen weekly workshops offered by different offices, faculty, and student co-leaders.
- **Who was involved with developing new structure:** APC, Faculty working group, working group of First-Year students, and current co-leaders. Our work was based on the survey results and the feedback we have received from students over the past two years. There is enthusiasm and energy around this new direction.

Advising for third term students

Why try something different?

- Students asking for and needing more support/structure as they develop and write their plan proposals
- Give students credible information that demystifies the process and lowers anxiety around the third term Plan Proposal meeting

What is the structure?

- Four, weekly hour-long meetings with 3-4 faculty members and their advisees
- Curriculum is easy to follow and has been refined over the last 2 years

Response from both students and faculty extremely positive. Great for new faculty!

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The Advising Block: Mondays/Thursdays 12:30 - 1:30

- Free of all classes (including make-up classes)
- Makes group advising structures possible
- Great time to meet with your advisees individually, as a group, or on a drop-in or emergent basis
- Students may need to work in one of the two blocks, but have been asked to reserve one block for advising-related activities (as determined by their advisor). If you will be using the advising block, you should tell your advisees which day to keep free of other standing engagements.
- Some FYF Workshops will be of interest to more advanced students
- At most, once per term I may ask you to be available (if possible) in one of the two advising blocks for drop in conversations with First-Year students

Advising Hub

Improved access to key information for advising

- Narrative evaluations are all visible and concern forms are included and retained
- Student schedules are easy to access for meeting scheduling, etc
- Plan database information is easily available
- Plan essays and FWT assessment documents are easy to find
- Notes feature enables faculty to store notes and could smooth transition to new advisor or enable collaboration in advising between faculty members.

What is next?

- Using the advising expectations to begin to define how we can recognize the advising faculty are doing as part of the FPRC process
- Piloting new approaches to more effectively help new faculty develop strong advising skills
- Continued evolution and evaluation of our current advising structures and support for new structures that faculty may want to try