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Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

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Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

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Abstract

The University of Arkansas System *e*Versity was established in 2014 by the University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees. More than 80% of the student population at the institution is non-traditional, with time or location restrictions that prevent participation in on-campus degree programs. *e*Versity Engage is a required orientation course completed by all students before enrolling at *e*Versity. Engage is intended to introduce students to institutional policies and resources, set student expectations for online learning at the institution, and provide the foundation for academic success as an online student. After completing Engage, students schedule an appointment with their Academic Success Advisor. This this appointment is called the Engage Advising Appointment. When *e*Versity began enrolling students, institutional leadership envisioned the Engage Advising Appointment as an interactive conversation between students and advisors that would serve as the foundation of the student-advisor relationship, and this relationship would be strengthened over time through student-centered proactive advising. In 2020, after four years of operation and an assessment of Engage and the Engage Advising Appointment, institutional leadership learned that Academic Success Advisors were spending most of their time providing prescriptive advising during the Engage Advising Appointment.

In 2020 Engage was revised, with substantial additions to curriculum and an instructor assigned to oversee student progress through the course, and a holistic approach to advising was adopted. An important aspect of the revised course content, and the focus of this study, is a module designed to obtain information related to the student's individual academic, professional, and personal journey, as well as motivating factors for seeking a credential at the institution, and personal and professional goals.

This study represents the first effort to collect data related to student-advisor communication during the Engage Advising Appointment. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted during the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment. A qualitative research method was used for this study because the researcher hopes to gain an understanding of student-advisor communication during the initial advising appointment, by exploring advisor experiences before and after the revision of Engage and associated work processes. The findings of this study can be used to inform holistic advising practice.

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A special acknowledgement must go to Dr. Kit Kacirek, who served as my Dissertation Director. Dr. Kacirek has guided me, encouraged me, inspired me, made me laugh when I wanted to cry, and never let me give up. I can't express how grateful I am for the experience of learning and growing under her leadership.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my grandmother, Strelsa Morris Machen, who taught me the importance and value of education. She was a role model for me, and I will always be inspired by the life she lived, how hard she worked to achieve her goals, her love of children and teaching children, her faith, and her determination. If not for her, I would never have dreamed of reaching for this level of education. I hope to inspire my daughter to dream big and work hard to make her dreams come true, as my grandmother did for me.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment. Engage is a one-credit-hour online orientation course, required for all University of Arkansas System eVersity students before enrollment. The course is offered at no charge and is intended to prepare students for online learning at the institution. Engage was revised to facilitate an individualized approach to academic advising to support the institution's mission. The University of Arkansas System eVersity primarily serves non-traditional students, and the entire student experience is online. According to the United States Department of Education, non-traditional students have at least one of the following characteristics: financial independence from parents or caregivers, enrolled part-time and employed full time, or students with dependents and a spouse. In addition, non-traditional students are generally defined as being 25 years of age or older and not enrolled continuously in a formal higher education setting (Lin & Wang, 2018).

This chapter introduces the background and context of the study, defines the problem statement and research questions, discusses the methodological rationale, and provides key terms.

Institutional History

The University of Arkansas System eVersity was established in 2014 by the University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees. In 2015, Arkansas Act 306 established eVersity as an "entirely online institution of the University of Arkansas System, which may offer certificates and degree programs in a manner that recognizes a systemic change from the traditional model for higher education," (eVersity.edu, 2021). The first students enrolled in courses at eVersity in January 2016.

According to the institution's website: "The Mission of *e*Versity is to provide high quality, affordable, accessible, online education relevant to the modern workplace," (eVersity.edu, 2021). The institution's mission requires continuous pursuit of an optimized online learning experience, by reducing the administrative and financial burdens on students, developing a personal strategies framework for academic success before enrollment, and providing proactive and individualized academic support throughout enrollment. The institution has identified primary student-target populations as those who have earned college credit but no credentials, those who earned a lower credential and desired a baccalaureate degree, and those in pursuit of additional higher education credentials for purposes of a career change or advancement or returning to the workforce. More than 80% of the student population at the institution is non-traditional, with time or location restrictions that prevent participation in on-campus degree programs.

Evolution of Academic Advising

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) recommends adopting an advising curriculum that reflects institutional missions, goals, and values. The advising curriculum should begin with defining desired student outcomes, so the curriculum can be intentionally designed to support those outcomes (Kraft-Terry & Kau, 2019). Non-traditional students are eVersity's target population, and the institution adopted a student-centered proactive advising philosophy to help these students. Proactive advising is an approach to academic advising that emphasizes the importance of intervention before students begin to experience academic difficulty. Proactive advising also incorporates positive student feedback throughout the academic journey (Kraft-Terry & Kau, 2019). A student-centered, proactive approach to advising was adopted because advising research demonstrates that this approach supports self-efficacy and self-discovery, helps students identify academic and professional goals, and empowers students to achieve their goals (King, 2000; Ford, 2007; Harris, 2018). Self-efficacy has been identified as an essential factor in the achievement of academic goals (Drake, 2011; Bolkan, Pedersen, Stormes, & Manke, 2021).

Each student's assigned Academic Success Advisor is the primary point of contact at eVersity. Academic Success Advisors are responsible for providing proactive and individualized academic support, interpreting institutional policies, assisting with major and career exploration, applying transfer coursework and developing degree plans, and directing students to appropriate resources. The institution's website describes the advisor-student relationship as similar to the coach-athlete relationship. Students and advisors work together to find a pathway to achieving academic goals. The advisor helps students identify and understand challenges, opportunities, and consequences of academic decisions. The primary role of each advisor is to empower students to achieve their academic goals, and communication is the most critical aspect of the advisor-student relationship (Belback, 2021; Ben-Yehuda, 2015; Elliott, 2020).

The Engage Advising Appointment is the student's initial interaction with an Academic Success Advisor and is scheduled after the student completes Engage. Advisors are assigned to students alphabetically by the student's last name. The appointment is conducted via phone and, in most cases, is approximately 30 minutes long. When eVersity began enrolling students, institutional leadership envisioned the Engage Advising Appointment as an interactive conversation between students and advisors that would serve as the foundation of the student-advisor relationship, and this relationship would be strengthened over time through proactive advising (Ford, 2007; Kraft-Terry & Kau, 2019; Belback, 2021). The institution leverages technology to provide feedback to students throughout each course. Automated emails and text messages are used to communicate positive messages to students based on academic performance. Academic Success Advisors initiate contact with students at specific intervals throughout each course. Each interaction with students is intended to serve as an opportunity for advisors to provide feedback to students regarding course progress and academic achievement, provide an opportunity for students to discuss challenges, and provide an opportunity for the advisor to recommend individualized intervention strategies and resources.

In 2020, after four years of operation and an assessment of Engage and the Engage Advising Appointment, institutional leadership learned that Academic Success Advisors were spending most of their time providing prescriptive advising. Prescriptive advising primarily focuses on information related to institutional and program policies, course selection and registration, degree requirements, and other information that is necessary for academic progression, but prescriptive advising does not facilitate a strong relationship between students and advisors and does not facilitate student development and self-efficacy (Harris, 2018; Drake, 2011). Academic Success Advisors at the institution reported spending most of the Engage Advising Appointment discussing policies, deadlines, transfer credits, degree requirements, the process of registration, and funding resources. The initial communication between students and Academic Success Advisors at eVersity was not achieving the desired outcome of providing the foundation for healthy student-advisor relationships based on trust and institutional investment in student success.

The course was significantly revised in 2020 when a new instructor was assigned, with significant additions to the curriculum in the areas of academic integrity, student responsibilities, expectations for online student behavior, college-level writing competence, and strategies for the successful completion of online academic programs. An essential aspect of the most recent revision of course content, and the focus of this study, is a module designed to obtain information related to the student's individual academic, professional, and personal journey, as well as motivating factors for seeking a credential at the institution, and personal and professional goals.

The findings of the evaluation of Engage and Academic Success Advisor experiences led leadership at eVersity to revise Engage in 2020. The revision includes a new course instructor, revised course objectives, and revised course content, as well as a change in the institution's approach to advising. A holistic advising philosophy was adopted to improve student support and student success. Holistic advising requires advisors to consider the "whole" student, with consideration to the student's overall well-being, including personal and professional responsibilities and goals, in addition to academic responsibilities and goals. The holistic approach to advising requires advisors to serve as a bridge to student support in the context of each student's current life circumstances, motivations, worldview and perspectives, experiences, values, goals, needs, strengths, and weaknesses (Belback, 2021; Pajak, 2021; Elliott, 2020; Hubbard, 2017; Schroeder & Terras, 2015; Ferguson, 2010). Engage course content was revised to allow students to provide information about their experiences, goals, and motivations, and assist advisors as they adopt a holistic advising approach.

eVersity Engage

Engage is intended to introduce students to institutional policies and resources, set student expectations for online learning at the institution, and provide the foundation for academic success as an online student. Engage is designed to mirror, as closely as possible, the format and design of all eVersity courses. Engage includes information about student services, technology requirements, and technical support, options for funding higher education costs, online security and etiquette, academic integrity, student responsibilities and expectations for student behavior, and strategies for academic success. The course also provides information related to degree programs offered at the institution. Through participation in the course, students practice navigating the institution's learning management system in a low-stakes environment before enrolling in a graded course, including submitting assignments in formats required for future courses.

Engage is also designed to gather information about the student. Throughout the course, students answer questions about themselves through written assignments that are uploaded and submitted through the learning management system (Blackboard). Questions are related to academic and professional goals, previous higher education experiences, and motivation for completing a college degree. Students also complete a time management assignment, in which they log the number of hours spent each week on various responsibilities. The time management assignment is intended to help students understand how they spend their time and develop a time management plan. Engage also includes two multiple choice questionnaires related to individual characteristics, perceived strengths, and perceived weaknesses and challenges. Students must complete all course assignments before scheduling a meeting with their assigned Academic Success Advisor.

Upon completing all course assignments, students schedule a meeting with their assigned Academic Success Advisor. This meeting is termed the Engage Advising Appointment. Advisors have access to assignment submissions through a dashboard provided by the course instructor. The advisor reviews submitted assignments before the appointment. The Engage Advising

Appointment is the final requirement for course completion. No letter grade is assigned for Engage, but students receive one credit hour toward the chosen degree program upon completing all course requirements. Engage has been a requirement for enrollment at the institution since its founding, and there is no cost for the course.

Problem Statement

Before the revision of Engage in 2020, the course did not adequately address the stated objectives and was not aligned with the primary goal of the course. This problem was identified during the annual assessment of course learning outcomes, which is part of the institution's continuous improvement plan. Engage was revised using current best practices for preparing non-traditional students for online education. This revision necessitated the work processes for Academic Success Advisors to be altered. Before course revision, Academic Success Advisors spent the majority of time during Engage advising appointments explaining institutional policies and procedures. With the course revision, students spend time learning this information, and complete several assessments to evaluate their understanding of the information, before the Engage advising appointment. The course revision and changes to associated work processes are intended to facilitate individualized discussions during the Engage advising appointment. This study represents the first effort to collect data related to student-advisor communication during the Engage advising appointment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted during the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment.

Research Question

To guide this study, the following research question and sub-questions were developed:

R1: How do advisers perceive that the revised Engage course has changed the advising function?

SQ1: How do advisors describe the student-advisor relationship?

SQ2: How have advisors responded to having increased student data?

Research Design

A qualitative research method was used for this study because the researcher hopes to understand student-advisor communication during the initial advising appointment, by exploring advisor experiences before and after the revision of Engage and associated work processes. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is useful for understanding individuals, organizations, life experiences, context, and other phenomena. Qualitative research is useful when the researcher wishes to know the answers to “how” or “why” questions (Creswell 2013). This study’s research question pertains to a recent revision of Engage, and the purpose of the study is to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed advisors’ initial advising appointment. For this reason, a case study design was selected for this research.

Data collection in case study research must be detailed, comprehensive, and obtained from multiple sources (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data collection for this study includes synchronous person-to-person interviews via Zoom and document analysis. The use of open-ended questions in qualitative inquiry allows for a range of responses and allows the researcher to ask additional questions based on responses, to gain a deeper understanding of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Open-ended questions are used during interviews for this study.

Interviews are the primary source of data collection in this study. The University of Arkansas System eVersity employs three full-time advisors, and these advisors are the cases chosen for interviews. Secondary sources of data include student transcripts, information provided by students during participation in Engage about previous higher education experiences, previous online education experiences, primary motivating factors for pursuing higher education, student goals, and student attrition and persistence trends.

Delimitations and Assumptions

Delimitations for this study are listed below.

- Only full-time Academic Advisors employed by the University of Arkansas System eVersity were invited to participate in this study.
- Only resources available to University of Arkansas System eVersity employees were used for data collection and analysis in this study.

The assumptions listed below have been identified for this study and were reflected upon after data collection, analysis, and findings.

- Data collection methods accurately reflect the perceptions of study participants.
- Responses provided by participants are honest.

Key Terms

- *Academic Success Advisor:* Primary contact for University of Arkansas System eVersity students; provides individual academic support and serves as a primary resource for all student needs.
- *eVersity Engage*: Online orientation course required for all students before enrolling in tuition-bearing courses at the University of Arkansas System eVersity; the purpose of the course is to prepare adult students for success in the online learning environment (1 credit hour).
- *Engage Advising Appointment:* Initial phone conversation between students and advisors after students complete all Engage course assignments and before students enroll in the first tuition-bearing course.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides information related to this study's background, context, and purpose. This chapter also defines the problem statement, research question, delimitations, assumptions, and key terms and discusses the rationale for a qualitative case study research design. Chapter two reviews the literature related to online student support services, academic advising philosophies, and advising adult learners.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment. This literature review includes evidence-based practices for advising adult and online learners, the evolution of advising practices toward academic success coaching, and a summary of the research related to holistic advising theory.

Challenges for Adult Learners

Adult (non-traditional) learners have been the fastest growing student population in higher education since the 1980s (Quiggins, Ulmer, Hainline, Burris, Ritz, & Van Dusen, 2016; Singh, Matthees, & Odetunde, 2021). Higher education is also seeing an increase in traditional-aged students with non-traditional life circumstances and non-traditional college experiences (Powers & Wartalski, 2021). Adult students are generally defined as 25 years of age or older, are employed and sustain themselves financially, and have responsibilities associated with being an independent adult outside the classroom (Powers & Wartalski, 2021). Adult students present with various life experiences, worldviews, professional responsibilities, and achievements, as well as a variety of expectations, experiences, and goals related to higher education.

Adult learners experience unique challenges throughout the higher education journey, including challenges associated with responsibilities outside the classroom, time and location constraints, challenges related to current technology and self-perceptions of technology competence, financial pressures and responsibilities, and feelings of intimidation or insecurity associated with navigating the higher education environment. Feelings of intimidation, insecurity, and self-doubt may be related to previous higher education experiences or messages received from family, mentors, or peers (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç, & Cagiltay, 2019; Passmore, 2019; Noel-Levitz, 2008).

Student Support Services for Online Learners

Online courses in higher education have become more common over the last two decades, and the Covid-19 pandemic forced educators across the globe to find distance education solutions to the problems caused by the pandemic (Fischer, Zhou, Rodriguez, Warschauer, & King, 2019; Dadhe & Kuthe, 2021). Research indicates that online students' attrition rates are higher compared to face-to-face learning environments. While the proliferation of online education programs has improved access to higher education, the research demonstrates deficiencies in online student support services that are critical to student success and retention (Abdous, 2019; Cross, 2018; Jackson Boothby, 2017). Student support services include academic advising, tutoring, peer mentoring, career services, mental health services, financial management services, library support services, interpretation of institutional policies and requirements, as well as academic support, including training in time management, prioritization, communication skills, and general study skills (Arifin, 2018; Appleton &Abernethy, 2013).

Advisors are on the front line of higher education, serving as the primary source of information for incoming and continuing students (Elliott, 2020). A 2018 study by Cross found that student perceptions of positive advising experiences are dependent on the following:

- The advisor is knowledgeable and provides accurate, timely, and proactive guidance
- The advisor contacts the student and initiates communication
- The advisor serves as a bridge to the institution and helps the student feel connected to the institutional community, and

- When appropriate, the advisor facilitates the transition to a new learning environment.

Student Expectations

These findings are consistent with previous research on student expectations related to academic advising (Irani, Wilson, Slough, & Rieger, 2014; Ortiz-Rodriguez, Telg, Irani, Roberts, & Rhoades, 2005). Face-to-face advising interactions have been shown to facilitate a rapport between students and advisors, and trust is a primary indicator of a positive student-advisor relationship (Miller, Greer, Cozier, Whitener, Patton, & Koffarnus, 2019; Astin, 1999). The literature suggests that advising experiences can impact student retention, student persistence, and alumni association participation (Powers & Wartalski, 2021; Jackson Boothby, 2017; Schroeder and Terras, 2015; Astin, 1999).

A 2020 study found that the expectations of online adult students are similar to those of adult students attending face-to-face courses (Alperin, Gaydos, & Phillips, 2020). A primary expectation identified in this study was the expectation of being adequately prepared for success in the learning environment (Alperin, Gaydos, & Phillips, 2020). A 2019 review of the literature demonstrates that academic preparation is a primary factor in student success, lack of academic preparation is a primary barrier for adult students, online learners are more likely to achieve education goals when they are prepared for online learning, and online adult learners are more likely to achieve education goals when they are prepared for online learning and supported throughout the academic journey (Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç, & Cagiltay, 2019). Other studies have identified a lack of preparation for education in an online environment as a primary risk factor for student attrition (Fischer, Zhou, Rodriguez, Warschauer, & King, 2019; Abdous, 2019).

Several factors have been identified as necessary for preparing adult learners for success in an online learning environment. One of these factors is the opportunity to practice navigating the learning management system, including locating course content and course resources and practicing submitting assignments before course enrollment. This practice interaction with the LMS should also include a course design and format that is as similar as possible to the course design and format students will encounter in future courses. Feeling comfortable with the LMS has been identified as a theme in qualitative studies related to adult student preparedness for online learning (McGowan, 2018; Alperin, Gaydos, & Phillips, 2020; Russo-Gleicher, 2014; Liu, 2019).

Advising Online Adult Learners

Advising experiences for online learners are inherently different from on-campus learner experiences, and support services for online students must be approached with this difference in mind. The academic quality of online courses and effective online support services are identified by students as critical to academic success (Miller, Greer, Cozier, Whitener, Patton, & Koffarnus, 2019). According to the 2015 Online Learners National Comparison Group for the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Priorities Survey for Online Learners (N = 118,322), academic advising experiences are closely tied to student perceptions of tuition costs being a valuable investment. The survey results indicate the importance of the online advising experience and individualized advisor-student communications (Miller, Greer, Cozier, Whitener, Patton, & Koffarnus, 2019).

Non-traditional students need individualized academic support designed to address the unique challenges and barriers that this heterogeneous group of students encounters (Karmelita, 2020; Kara, Erdogdu, Kokoç, & Cagiltay, 2019). Studies that evaluated adult learners' academic advising experiences have identified the importance of trust in the institution as a central theme.

Non-traditional students must believe that the institution is invested in student success (Noel-Levitz, 2008; Ruffalo & Lumina, 2019; Powers and Wartalski, 2021; Alperin, Gaydos, & Phillips, 2020).

Developing and maintaining trust and confidence that the institution cares about student success and not just tuition dollars has been shown to facilitate personal, professional, and academic growth for non-traditional students (Garner, 2019; Ben-Yehuda, 2015; Cross, 2018). Academic advisors are primary institutional representatives tasked with forming and maintaining student relationships. This relationship is the foundation for developing and maintaining trust in the institution and is critical for identifying pathways for students to achieve academic goals (Simpson, 2018; Elliott, 2020). Therefore, academic advisors need to know each student's history, current circumstances, goals, strengths, and weaknesses to form a relationship, cultivate trust, and provide the individualized academic support and resources needed to help the student achieve academic success (Garner, 2019, Elliott, 2020).

The literature suggests that effective communication between academic advisors and students is necessary for building trust (Garner, 2019; Cross, 2018; Karmelita, 2020). Communication between students and advisors is multifaceted and can include program documents, student handbooks, catalogs, and other documents. These documents should communicate expectations, responsibilities, and program and institutional rules, regulations, and requirements. Advisors should refer to these documents during student-advisor communications (Powers & Wartalski, 2021; Appleton & Abernethy, 2013; Belback, 2021).

With the revision of Engage, advisors are provided information about each student's background, goals, motivation, and anticipated challenges as they pursue their academic credentials. This information is provided before the initial phone conversation between students and advisors. It is intended to facilitate a student-advisor relationship built on open communication, trust, and a shared goal of student success.

Advising Models and Theories

Institutions of higher education use various advising models, theories, and strategies to provide a meaningful and beneficial advising experience for students. Historically, the most common academic advising approaches include prescriptive, developmental, intrusive or proactive, and appreciative advising. The different approaches to academic advising are grounded in a variety of theories and identify a variety of desired outcomes for advising experiences. Still, generally all approaches to advising include the most basic function of the advisor, which is to provide accurate and complete information related to institutional policies, degree program policies, degree requirements, and course registration (Powers & Wartalski, 2021; Bolkan, Pedersen, Stormes, & Manke, 2021).

Prescriptive advising is arguably the most basic approach to advising, in which the advisor serves as an information disseminator, and the student follows directions provided by the advisor (Dedmon, 2012; Robbins, 2012). Although prescriptive advising is not grounded in any specific theory, social cognitive theory may be the most applicable theory to this approach to academic advising (Bolkan, Pedersen, Stormes, & Manke, 2021). The constructs of self-efficacy and goal identification, both elements of social cognitive theory, apply to student behaviors related to persistence and achieving goals. Prescriptive advising assumes that students can achieve academic goals when provided with the essential information necessary to progress to degree completion (Elliott, 2020). Prescriptive advising is decidedly not a holistic approach to academic advising, as it functions essentially as a one-way flow of information that does not consider the individual student (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016).

Developmental advising evolved from the transactional approach of prescriptive advising and is grounded in student development theory. Unlike prescriptive advising, developmental advising does not approach all students the same way but strives to assess students' current emotional, cognitive, and motivation levels, and provides more individualized support (McGill, 2016). Developmental advising strategies are focused on helping students make good decisions to achieve academic and professional goals. This approach views academic advising experiences as opportunities to support student growth and development (McGill, 2016). Student development theories support student growth and development through social, cultural, academic, and professional norms and behaviors, as well as organizational values and expectations in institutions of higher education (Harris, 2020). Academic advisors practicing developmental advising should assess a student's current circumstances, including beliefs, behaviors, assumptions, and values, and help students find pathways to move forward and closer to their academic and professional goals (Hengesteg, Bestler, & Marcketti, 2021). A significant element of developmental advising is helping students understand themselves and challenging them to critically reflect to open different paths of thought, or help students think differently (Harris, 2020). Purposefully including the goal of student development in academic advising practices is a hallmark of developmental advising (McGill, 2016).

Proactive advising, sometimes called intrusive advising, has shown promise for supporting online learners and at-risk students (Wiley Education Services, 2021; Garner, 2019). A 2018 study concluded that online students believe they are essentially on their own pursuing a college credential (Cross, 2018). The online classroom can feel like a lonely, isolated place to learn, especially when students are struggling to understand course content or when students want to celebrate an academic light-bulb moment. Proactive advising strategies mitigate feelings of being disconnected from the institution, instructors, and peers by building a solid connection with each student. The proactive advisor works to help students feel comfortable asking for assistance or guidance, communicate their frustrations, and celebrate academic successes. Rather than sending a message to students to ask for help if they experience problems, proactive advisors communicate regularly with students to identify potential problems or challenges before they become overwhelming and to provide positive feedback when students are performing well academically (Kraft-Terry and Kau, 2019; Cross, 2018). The theoretical foundation of proactive advising is based on the belief that persistence is strongly influenced by social, academic, and organizational integration, as well as an emphasis on the importance of orientation to higher education experiences and expectations at the beginning of the higher education journey (Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016).

Appreciative advising is grounded in positive psychology and appreciative inquiry and requires the advisor to help students find strategies to achieve academic goals using their natural strengths (Garner, 2019). Appreciative inquiry, a social constructionist approach, has been shown to empower individuals to explore possibilities and embrace change as an exciting adventure rather than something to be avoided (Hung, Phinney, Chaudhury, Rodney, Tabamo, & Bohl, 2018). Appreciative advising begins with identifying students' strengths, with the advisor helping students leverage identified strengths to overcome challenges and weaknesses. Through repeated appreciative advising sessions over time, students learn how the strengths and skills they already have can be used to succeed in different situations. Appreciative advising models have also been shown to improve critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, self-efficacy, and self-confidence (Virtue, Root, & Lenner, 2021; Cross, 2018; Garner, 2019).

Evolution of Advising Practice

Traditional academic advising models place the advisor in a student affairs or student services department, delivering prescriptive advising strategies (Ferguson, 2010; Ford, 2007). As advising has evolved, the responsibilities and expectations of academic advisors have evolved. Current academic advisor roles are consistent across higher education in some aspects. For example, academic advisors are expected to help students navigate the higher education landscape and are involved in every stage of a student's progression through higher education programs, from admission to graduation (Garner, 2019; Elliott, 2020). Advisors are expected to provide accurate information, provide students with appropriate resources, and contribute to student academic development as they progress toward graduation (Gupta, 2018; Garner, 2019).

In many cases, institutional policies surrounding the role of academic advisors in higher education were developed when most college students were traditional students. These policies were not designed for the characteristics and needs of adult learners, and research supports the need for advising tailored to the unique and diverse characteristics and needs of adult learners (Hubbard, 2017; Garner, 2019; Karmelita, 2020).

Academic coaching has emerged as an effective strategy for improving student retention and success, and academic advisors are increasingly transitioning from the traditional role of prescriptive advisor to academic coach. Academic coaches, also known as success coaches or academic success coaches, focus on student support based on the student's individual strengths, weaknesses, challenges, motivations, and goals. The role of the academic success coach may be thought of as “mission control” for the student experience. Research demonstrates that coaching in academic settings improves student success outcomes, particularly for adult learners. (Ben-Yehuda, 2015; Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021).

Evolving Advising Competencies and Training

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising worked to develop 20 core competencies for academic advising practice. The 20 competencies are grouped into the three areas of conceptual competence, informational competence, and relational competence. Table 1 shows each competency by group (NACADA, 2017). Conceptual competencies are related to the values, ethics, and goals of academic advising as a profession. Information competencies are related to legal, institutional, and campus rules and regulations and resources. Relational competencies refer to the daily practice of academic advising, including advisors’ communication and interpersonal skills.

The practice of advising began as a transactional practice designed to assist students with course registration and progress toward degree completion and has evolved into a practice of student development (McGill, Heikkila, & Lazarowicz, 2020). Academic advisors come from various academic and professional backgrounds and may have no formal education or training to prepare them for advising practice. The practice of academic advising relies heavily on the advisor’s interpersonal skills, communication skills, and ability to build a healthy relationship with students (McGill, Heikkila, & Lazarowicz, 2020). The advisor-student relationship has been compared to the relationship between athlete and coach, as well as the relationship between patient and therapist, and research suggests the advisor-student relationship impacts student retention, student success, graduation rates, student development, and student satisfaction (McGill, Heikkila, & Lazarowicz, 2020; Ford, 2007; Horvath, 2001).

Table 1 NACADA Core Competencies

NACADA Core Competencies	
Conceptual Competencies	1. History and role of academic advising in higher education
	2. NACADA's core values of academic advising
	3. Theory relevant to academic advising
	4. Academic advising approaches and strategies
	5. Expected outcomes of academic advising
	6. How equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained
Informational Competencies	1. Institution-specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture
	2. Curriculum, degree programs, and academic requirements and options
	3. Institution- specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations
	4. Legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy and confidentiality
	5. Characteristics, needs, and experiences of significant and emerging student populations
	6. Campus and community resources that support student success
	7. Information technology applicable to relevant advising roles
Relational Competencies	1. Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising
	2. Create rapport and build academic advising relationships
	3. Communicate in a respectful and inclusive manner
	4. Plan and conduct successful advising interactions
	5. Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum
	6. Facilitate problem-solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting
	7. Engage in ongoing assessment and development of advising practice

Advisor Boundaries and Ethical Issues

Academic advisors are responsible for providing sound, reliable, individualized academic advice to advisees, and advisees need to trust advisors to meet this responsibility (Xue, Lutz, & Boon, 2020). Advisor training tends to focus heavily on institutional policies, procedures, rules, and regulations, as well as institutional expectations of advising staff, with little training related to communication skills, interpersonal skills, relationship-building, advising theories, or ethical issues (Xue, Lutz, & Boon, 2020; King, 2000; Donaldson, McKinney, Lee, & Pino, 2016). NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising developed core values for the advising community, which serve as ethical guidelines for academic advising (Xue, Lutz, & Boon, 2020; King, 2000; NACADA, 2005). Table 2 shows NACADA core values (NACADA, 2017).

Table 2 NACADA Core Values

Core Value	Description
Caring	Academic advisors respond to and are accessible to others in ways that challenge, support, nurture, and teach. Advisors build relationships through empathetic listening and compassion for students, colleagues, and others.
Commitment	Academic advisors value and are dedicated to excellence in all dimensions of student success. Advisors are committed to students, colleagues, institutions, and the profession through assessment, scholarly inquiry, lifelong learning, and professional development.
Empowerment	Academic advisors motivate, encourage, and support students and the greater educational community to recognize their potential, meet challenges, and respect individuality.
Inclusivity	Academic advisors respect, engage, and value a supportive culture for diverse populations. Advisors strive to create and support environments that consider the needs and perspectives of students, institutions, and colleagues through openness, acceptance, and equity.
Integrity	Academic advisors act intentionally by ethical and professional behavior developed through reflective practice. Advisors value honesty, transparency, and accountability to the student, institution, and the advising profession.
Professionalism	Academic advisors act by the values of the profession of advising for the greater good of students, colleagues, institutions, and higher education in general.
Respect	Academic advisors honor the inherent value of all students. Advisors build positive relationships by understanding and appreciating students' views and cultures, maintaining a student-centered approach and mindset, and treating students with sensitivity and fairness.

In summary, academic advisors have ethical obligations to facilitate student autonomy; serve as student advocates; provide guidance related to academic decisions based on the individual student's circumstances, goals, and best interest; educate students regarding academic options and potential consequences of academic decisions; and consistently provide reliable, accurate, and thorough information to students (Xue, Lutz, & Boon, 2020; NACADA, 2017).

Annas (2018) and Yearby (2016) emphasize the concept of informed consent when considering the ethical responsibilities of academic advisors. In other professions, such as health care and financial advising, informed consent means that the professional has an ethical obligation to provide accurate and complete information related to options, decisions, potential risks and benefits, and possible outcomes of the patient's or client's choices. From an academic advising standpoint, advisors have an ethical obligation to facilitate informed consent regarding academic options, decisions, and potential outcomes. Informed consent incorporates the principle of autonomy, which concludes that individuals have the right to make their own decisions. Informed consent also includes the principle of professional responsibility to provide all relevant information thoroughly and competently and empower the individual to make decisions that will be most beneficial to the individual (Annas, 2018; Yearby, 2016).

Recent literature regarding advising practice indicates that advisors identify the need to fully understand the students they are advising as an ethical obligation of advising practice (Belback, 2021; Xue, Lutz, & Boon, 2020; Jones, 2019). Learning analytics and data mining to inform advising practices has also been identified as an ethical concern. With the emergence of learning analytics and data-driven approaches in institutions of higher education, ethical questions related to student privacy, student autonomy, and education equity must be considered (Jones, 2019).

Conceptual framework

Holistic Advising Theory

Holistic advising is an approach to academic advising that incorporates elements of the various advising theories and models and brings the different approaches together. Holistic advising requires advisors to consider the "whole" student, with consideration to the student's overall well-being, including personal and professional responsibilities and goals, in addition to academic responsibilities and goals. The holistic approach to advising requires advisors to support students in the context of each student's current life circumstances, motivations, worldview and perspectives, experiences, values, goals, needs, strengths, and weaknesses (Belback, 2021; Pajak, 2021; Elliott, 2020; Hubbard, 2017; Schroeder & Terras, 2015; Ferguson, 2010). As holistic advising theory becomes translated into practice, the approach reflects the evolution of the advisors' role from information disseminator to student development facilitator and academic success coach (Hubbard, 2017; Gildehaus, Cotter, Buck, Sousa, Hueffer, & Reynolds, 2019).

The holistic advising model requires the assimilation of all the information the advisor has about the student to generate a comprehensive understanding of the student. This comprehensive understanding helps advisors provide individualized strategies for student success and guide students throughout the higher education journey (Ferguson, 2010; Hubbard, 2017). Unlike traditional prescriptive advising, holistic advising requires the advisor to serve much more as a facilitator of academic, professional, and personal growth. Holistic advising theory assumes a strong student-advisor relationship built on mutual trust between the student and the advisor and the mutual goal of student success (Belback, 2021; Pajak, 2021; Hubbard, 2017; Schroeder & Terras, 2015).

The revision of *e*Versity Engage was grounded in a holistic approach to advising. The revised course is intended to serve as the foundation for student engagement with the institution, facilitate stronger student-advisor relationships, promote effective communication between students and advisors, empowering advisors to provide individualized support and empower students to succeed. A holistic approach to student advising will inform this study's research questions and data analysis.

Figure 1 Typical Student Support (Achieving the Dream, 2018).

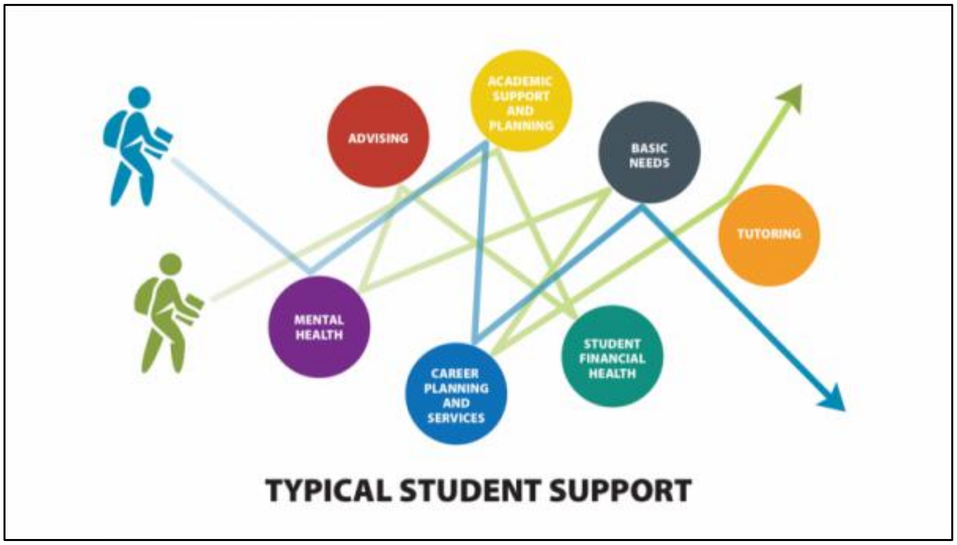
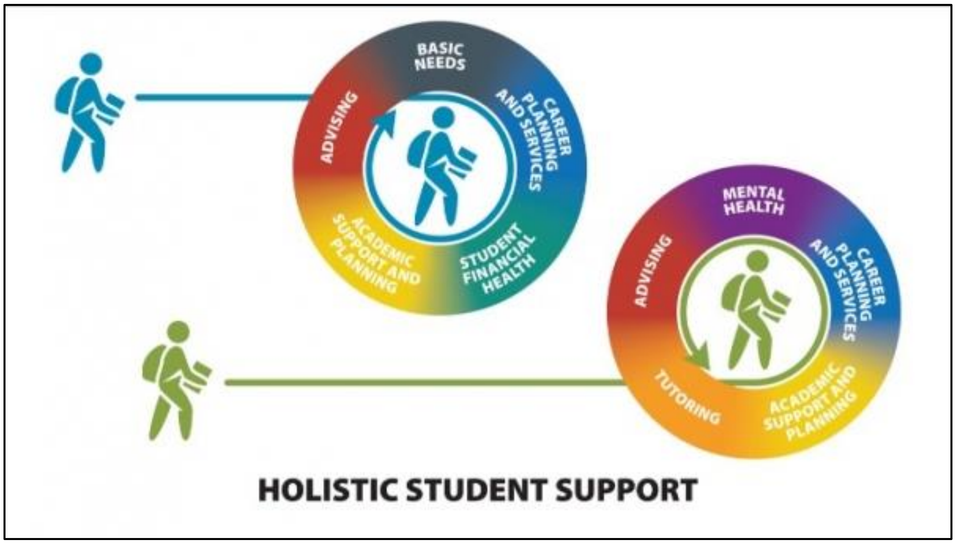


Figure 2 Holistic Student Support (Achieving the Dream, 2018).



Chapter Summary

The relationship between student retention and academic advising practices has been well researched and specific advising strategies that promote student retention and success have been identified (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021). Translating holistic advising theory into practice is an ongoing effort that the institution continuously evaluates. Engage will continue to be revised based on the institutional mission of facilitating student success (Pechac & Slantcheva-Durst, 2021; Schroeder & Terras, 2015).

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment. The primary data collection method is person-to-person synchronous interviews via Zoom with Academic Success Advisors at the University of Arkansas System eVersity. Additional data collection includes document analysis of student emails to the eVersity Advising Inbox, advisor notes during Engage Advising Appointments, records of academic integrity violations, and records of student academic performance, including grade point average and satisfactory academic progress. This chapter discusses the appropriateness of a qualitative case study design, case selection details, data collection and analysis, as well as the study's credibility, dependability, and transferability.

Research Method

Qualitative research is intended to gain a better understanding of the subject through data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Quantitative research assumes that data collection and analysis will reveal knowledge, whereas qualitative research assumes that data collection and analysis will construct knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data collection through interviews and document analysis are common in qualitative research designs (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The qualitative researcher identifies criteria for selecting participants, rather than using a randomized method of participant selection, to improve the quality of the data collected (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Quantitative studies generally collect numerical data that is analyzed to apply information gained from a smaller group of participants to larger groups or populations (Creswell, 2013).

As instructor of eVersity Engage, the researcher has experience revising the course curriculum, interacting with students throughout the course, and interacting with student advisors at the institution before and after course revision. The researcher has access to secondary data sources, including email communication between students and advisors, advisor notes related to student communications, and student academic performance documents. The researcher also has experience interacting with student advisors before and after the revision of Engage, and access to the documents used for secondary data collection before and after the revision of Engage. Individual interviews are the primary source of data collection, combined with analysis of related documents; sources allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic.

Case Study Design

Creswell (2013) discusses different approaches to qualitative inquiry, including grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and case study, and all have several common elements. “Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive” (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, p. 37). Case study research must first identify the bounded system to be studied and an appropriate case or multiple cases, and then data collection and analysis can begin (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

A descriptive multi-case study design was developed for this study, based on the work of Creswell (2013) and Merriam & Tisdell (2015). The research questions were designed to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment. The bounded system to be studied is the perception of individual academic advisors, and the academic advisors serve as the cases (Creswell, 2013).

Identifying the cases. This is a multi-case study since more than one case is used to gather information. The advisors eligible to participate in this study were employed by the University of Arkansas System eVersity between 2018 and 2022. This period was identified as the context of the study because the revision of Engage occurred in 2020, and all Academic Success Advisors employed by the institution during this period have experience conducting the Engage advising appointment (the initial communication between students and advisors) before and after the revision of Engage.

The goal of qualitative case studies is to understand, describe, and contextualize the phenomenon being studied (Lester, Cho, & Lochmiller, 2020). For this study, the phenomenon is advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed their initial student advising appointment. Quantitative inquiry designed for generalization to a larger population refers to study participants as samples. The participants in this study are identified as cases rather than samples to avoid confusion (Creswell, 2013). Three cases were identified as eligible to participate in this study based on their employment as Academic Success Advisors at the University of Arkansas System eVersity between 2018 and 2022. I meet with the cases for one hour each week via Zoom to discuss student and advising issues, and this schedule of weekly meetings has been occurring since August 2020. Since meetings for this study take place remotely via Zoom, distance was not a factor that was considered when identifying possible cases. The three potential cases were invited to participate in this study, and all three agreed. However, one case left the institution before data collection and did not participate in the study. The two cases who participated in the study have the exact date of hire at the institution.

Cases chosen to participate in this study were contacted by email and asked to participate. The Informed Consent document (Appendix A) is mailed to participants and collected before the interview. Each interview is scheduled for 1 ½ hour via Zoom. Before the interview, an email is sent to each participant explaining the background of the study, audio and visual technology to be used during the interview, and procedures for maintaining confidentiality. Participants were not compensated and did not receive anything of value as an incentive for participation.

Instrumentation

Based on the descriptive nature of this study, one broad research question is used to guide the researcher, "How do advisers perceive the revised Engage course has changed the advising function?" Two sub-questions were used for this study: "How do advisors describe the student-advisor relationship?" and "How have advisors responded to increased student data?" The Interview Protocol (Appendix B) consists of open-ended questions to guide each interview, intending to promote each participant's own experience, meaning, and values. The questions included in the Interview Protocol are intended to facilitate discussion and are based on my assumptions about the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, it is essential the researcher needs to keep an open mind and remain flexible and reflective during the interviews so that questions may be added to explore unanticipated or compelling concepts that arise (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Since an Interview Protocol is used to guide each interview, the interview format is semi-structured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A Contact Summary (Appendix C) is used to document the researcher's filed notes, expressing my thoughts about the interview and new questions that emerge during or the interview and transcription processes.

The content of each interview is transcribed, and any additional questions prompted by the transcription are added to the Contact Summary. Contact Summaries are emailed to each participant to confirm that their perceptions are accurately interpreted. Each participant is asked to provide additional insight based on the questions at the end of the Contact Summary. An Internal Review Board approval is sought from the University of Arkansas.

Data Collection

Patton (2002) identifies three types of data collected in qualitative inquiry: narrative descriptions of experiences, perceptions, and values; observations of human experience; and documents directly related to the research question. Narrative descriptions can be obtained through interviews, observations can be recorded in the researcher's filed notes, and documents include written records (Patton, 2002). One-on-one or person-to-person interviews with study participants are often used in qualitative research because of several factors (Klem, Shields, Smith, & Bunzli, 2022). First, person-to-person interviews enable the researcher to adapt the study to the phenomenon based on information revealed throughout the study. Second, person-to-person interviews promote inductive reasoning, which is often needed in qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Third, person-to-person interviews facilitate a thorough and descriptive analysis of the individual perceptions of each study participant, allowing researchers to understand the meaning that participants ascribe to the phenomenon (Klem, Shields, Smith, & Bunzli, 2022). For this study, synchronous person-to-person interviews between the researcher and each participant via Zoom are the primary tool for data collection. The researcher's field notes, documented on the Contact Summary for each interview, are used to provide context (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Since I have not been present during the Engage Advising Appointment between students and advisors, I have not been able to observe behaviors during those appointments. Therefore, I rely on interviews to discern the advisors' perceptions, experiences, and construction of meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Document analysis is used to augment the interviews in this study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Existing texts to be used as secondary data sources include emails from students to the eVersity Advising Inbox, advisor notes during Engage Advising Appointments, records of academic integrity violations, and records of student academic performance, including grade point average and satisfactory academic progress.

Perceptual Information

In qualitative inquiry, perceptual information is often gathered through interviews and is the principal data collected throughout the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Perceptual data is not intended to represent facts, it is intended to describe the perceptions of each participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The Interview Protocol used in this study serves as a guide to the researcher and includes open-ended questions. Still, additional questions and concepts that arise during the interview and transcription may also be explored (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Field notes, transcribed as soon as possible after each interview, serve as tools to summarize each interview (Sutton & Austin, 2015). A Contact Summary is used to guide each interview synopsis in this study. Contact Summaries include the researcher's impressions of each interview and provide context (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Data Analysis

The role of the researcher in qualitative data analysis is to present the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015) thoroughly and accurately. Qualitative data analysis is primarily inductive, but deductive logic is also required (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim for this study. A list of anticipated codes (Appendix E) was created based on my knowledge of advisor practices and workflow before and after the revision of Engage. Notes are added to the transcribed interviews to indicate codes from the anticipated code list. As the study progresses, the list of codes evolves throughout the study's data collection and data analysis phases to facilitate inductive and deductive coding. As patterns emerge, codes are revised to connect groups of codes and combine them into one (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). New or unanticipated concepts arising during the data collection and analysis phases are added to the list.

Qualitative data synthesis is important in strengthening qualitative inquiry (Munthe-Kaas, Glenton, Booth, Noyes, & Lewin, 2019). Cross-case analysis and data triangulation are used to connect findings from multiple data sources and ensure thorough data analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The cross-case analysis is the process of identifying similarities and differences between themes that emerge within each case (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). A predetermined list of codes, anticipated by the researcher based on the research question, the researcher's understanding of the context of the study, and the theoretical framework, can be helpful in beginning the process of categorizing data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). During data collection, the researcher starts to identify and categorize raw data through the lens of the study theoretical framework and based on the predetermined list of codes (Yin, 2018). Coding is an ongoing process throughout data collection and analysis, and the predetermined list of codes evolves throughout the study's data collection and analysis stages. Connecting ideas and themes within and across cases allows the researcher to identify patterns. This process may condense multiple codes into one, expand one code into multiple codes, and add unanticipated codes to the predetermined list (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Patterns that emerge may support or refute the researcher's assumptions that influenced the predetermined list of anticipated codes (Manley, 2018).

Triangulation of data is collecting and comparing data from multiple sources (Yin, 2018). Face-to-face interviews and review of related documents are data sources for this study. The study's rigor is strengthened when findings are corroborated across cases, through a review of related documents, and the lens of current literature related to holistic advising theory (Yin, 2018). Data triangulation also facilitates the emergence of additional findings throughout the data analysis process (Yin, 2018).

Limitations of the Study

This study includes two cases from one institution in the University of Arkansas System. The institution has been operating since January 2016 and is the only 100% online campus in the system. These factors may limit the transferability of this study.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher plays an active role in all phases of the study and serves as the tool for data collection and analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The researcher must approach the study with an open mind and remain flexible and reflective in data collection, data analysis, and data reporting to allow the participants to freely describe the meaning of their experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2013). Rich data collection through face-to-face interviews requires the researcher to remain open to unanticipated findings and stay willing to adapt the study design throughout the data collection and analysis processes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Yin, 2018). Since the purpose of qualitative inquiry is to look for meaning, the researcher must be reflective when reporting findings (Creswell, 2013).

The primary source of data collection in this study is face-to-face interviews. When person-to-person interviews are used to collect data, the relationship between the researcher and the participants and any potential power imbalances are key factors that may influence the data and introduce bias (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Active listening is important for the researcher to gather relevant, accurate, and thorough information throughout the interview (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I practice active listening during weekly meetings with the participants, which have been occurring since August 2020, and I have developed a strong working relationship with the participants due to these meetings. The meetings have also allowed me to practice reflection and ask follow-up questions to gain additional insight on the topics being discussed. A strong working relationship based on trust between the researcher and study participants promotes the free exchange of information and minimizes bias in this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the study has value and significance, Bloomberg & Volpe (2016) report the importance of focusing on the study's credibility, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility

Credibility can also be understood as validity in terms of research rigor (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Data triangulation strengthens the credibility of qualitative data analysis and conclusions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This study uses data triangulation by connecting the information provided by participants to findings presented by the researcher. Participants are provided the transcribed Contact Summary and asked to confirm that their experiences and perceptions are accurately and thoroughly represented and that the researcher understands what the participants intended to convey in the person-to-person interviews.

Dependability

Dependability can also be understood as reliability in terms of research rigor and relates to data collection and analysis processes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). To strengthen dependability in qualitative inquiry, researchers should comprehensively describe the methods used to collect and analyze data from all sources (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Interview transcripts, coding processes and the evolution of codes as the study progresses, and participant confirmation of the researcher's conclusions help reduce researcher bias and support the study's dependability.

Transferability

Quantitative inquiry typically depends on large sample sizes to improve transferability. In contrast, qualitative inquiry is generally not designed to be transferable (Creswell, 2013). Providing context for data collection and analysis in qualitative research allows readers to evaluate possible transferability (Creswell, 2013). Context is provided in this study through a detailed description of the following:

- Background and historical context of the institution.
- Description of academic advising practices before and after the revision of Engage.
- Development and implementation of a Student Dashboard (Appendix D) during the revision of Engage, which is used to provide more detailed information about each student to the academic advisor before the Engage Advising Appointment.
- Description of the institution's goal of working toward a holistic approach to academic advising.
- Description and presentation of the final code list, as well as description and explanation of previous iterations of the code list.

- Description of data collection and analysis processes and how these processes informed the researcher’s conclusions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the methodology used for this qualitative descriptive multi-case study, designed to explore advisor perceptions of how student data submitted in the revised Engage course informed their initial advising appointment. The use of person-to-person interviews and document analysis for data collection was discussed, as well as an explanation of case selection, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness of the study, and limitations.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study titled Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education. You are invited to participate in this study because you serve as Academic Success Advisor for the University of Arkansas System *e*Versity. Your responses to questions asked during this study will inform institutional policies related to *e*Versity Engage and highlight advisor-student communications before and after the revision of Engage.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE STUDY

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this study is to understand student-advisor communications after students complete *e*Versity Engage. The study will provide information that can be used to create student-focused policies and prepare students for success in an online higher education setting. This study will focus on advisor perceptions and experiences in communicating with students during the Engage Advising Appointment. The goal is to highlight areas of the student orientation process that contribute to a positive experience and identify potential barriers for students as they proceed through orientation, declare a major and enroll in a tuition-bearing course at the University of Arkansas System *e*Versity.

Who will participate in this study?
Academic Success Advisors currently employed by the University of Arkansas System *e*Versity.

What am I being asked to do?
You are being asked to participate in a one and one-half hour virtual meeting with the principle researcher to answer questions about your perceptions and experiences communicating with students during the Engage Advising Appointment.

What are possible risks or discomforts to participants?
There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

What are possible benefits to participants?
There are no known or anticipated benefits associated with participating in this study.

How long will the study last?
One virtual meeting with the principal researcher, one and one-half hour in length, will be expected of study participants.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?
No compensation will be provided to study participants.

Will I have to pay for anything?
There is no cost associated with participating in this study.

What are the options if I do not want to participate in this study?
Participation in this study is voluntary and you may decline to participate. You may also stop participating at any time during the study. Your job and responsibilities will not be affected in any way if you decline to participate at any time during the study.

How will confidentiality of study participants be protected?

- All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law.
- Participants' names will not be included in any interview transcripts. Participants will be cited as Interview 1, Interview 2, etc.
- The interview will be recorded via Zoom and will only be accessible to the participant and principal researcher. The recorded interview will be stored electronically and password protected. All other electronic materials associated with this study will be password protected.
- Participants will have the opportunity to review their own interview transcript to make any changes before the study proceeds.

Will I know the results of the study?
At the conclusion of the study, you may request information regarding the results of the study. To request information, please contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Kit Kacirek, at kitk@uark.edu or contact the principal researcher, Jennifer Hoelzeman, at jchoelze@uark.edu. You will receive a copy of this form to keep for your records.

What should I do if I have questions about the study?
You may contact the faculty advisor or principal researcher listed below with any questions or concerns you have about the study.

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office if you have questions about your rights as a research study participant, or to discuss any concerns about or problems with the study.

Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statements and have had the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns, and my questions and concerns have been satisfactorily addressed. I understand the purpose of the study and the potential risks and benefits. I understand that participation is voluntary, and I may stop participating at any time. I understand that any significant new findings from this research will be shared with the participants. I understand that I am not waiving any rights by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Name Date

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

1. How would you describe the function of Academic Success Advisors at eVersity?

2. How would you describe the relationship between students and advisors?

3. What are your thoughts about having additional information available about students prior to meeting with them?

4. Please describe the Engage advising appointment before the revision of Engage.
    a. What was purpose and intent of appointment?
    b. What information was discussed?

5. Please describe the Engage advising appointment after the revision of Engage.
    a. What is purpose and intent of appointment?
    b. What information is discussed?
    c. Have you noticed any difference in your communication with students during the Engage advising appointment after the revision of Engage?

6. Have you noticed any difference in the likelihood of a student keeping a scheduled Engage advising appointment after the revision of Engage, compared to before?

7. Have you noticed any difference in students' understanding of institutional policies after the revision of Engage, compared to before?

8. Please share any other thoughts about your interactions with students before and after the revision of Engage.

Appendix C: Contact Summary

Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

1. How would you describe the function of Academic Success Advisors at eVersity?

2. How would you describe the relationship between students and advisors?

3. What are your thoughts about having additional information available about students prior to meeting with them?

4. Describe appointment before revision of Engage.

   Purpose and intent?

   Information discussed?

5. Describe appointment after revision of Engage.

   Purpose and intent?

   Information discussed?

   Differences compared to before revision?

6. Difference in likelihood of keeping appointment?

7. Difference in understanding of policies?

8. Additional thoughts? Suggestions for improvement?

Notes:

Appendix D: Student Dashboard

Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

Student ID	**Last Name**	**First Name**	**CNS Status**	**Pre-test score:**
				Post-test score:
Knowledge Check	**Score**	**Time Management Budget**		
Technology		**Activity**		**Hours Per Week**
Funding My Future		Working/commuting to and from work		
Prepare for Online Education		Sleep		
Academic Success Strategies		Caregiver for children, parents, others		
Academic Integrity		Household chores		
Advising/Student Responsibilities		Nutritional needs/cooking/grocery shopping		
Academic Policies		Self care (exercise/physical&mental health)		
Enrollment Policies		Socializing, relaxing, hobbies, etc.		
Previous Online Education?		**TOTAL**		
Written Assignment: Goals				
Written Assignment: Motivation				
Written Assignment: Higher Education Experieces				
Previous higher education experience?	Anticipated challenges?	Plan to address challenges?	How will earning a degree help you?	

Appendix E: List of Predetermined Codes

Advisor-Student Communication in Preparation for Online Education

Advising Function

1. Revision of Engage did not change advising function.
2. Revision of Engage did change advising function.

Student-Advisor Relationship

1. Revision of Engage did not impact advisor’s perception of the student-advisor relationship.
2. Revision of Engage did impact advisor's perception of the student-advisor relationship.

Engage Advising Appointment

1. Revision of Engage changed topics discussed during the Engage advising appointment.
2. Revision of Engage did not change topics discussed during the Engage advising appointment.
3. Revision of Engage changed the purpose and/or intent of the Engage advising appointment.
4. Revision of Engage did not change the purpose and/or intent of the Engage advising appointment.

Student Data

1. Access to student data obtained in revised Engage course has impacted the student-advisor relationship.
2. Access to student data obtained in revised Engage course has not impacted the student-advisor relationship.

Revised Engage Course

1. Revision of Engage has had a positive impact on the student-advisor relationship.
2. Revision of Engage has had a negative impact on the student-advisor relationship.
3. Revision of Engage has had no impact on the student-advisor relationship.
4. Revision of Engage impacted the likelihood that students will keep the initial advising appointment, rather than cancel or not show up.
5. Revision of Engage did not impact the likelihood that students will keep the initial advising appointment, rather than cancel or not show up.
6. Suggestions for improvement.