New insights & directions for MIT first-year advising

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Greta Farrell
1. First year advising at MIT
2. Prior efforts & recommendations
3. 2019-2020 pilot
4. Study introduction & evaluation
5. Findings
6. Current & future implementations
7. Q&A
Current first year advising options provide choices and challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional (faculty and staff)</td>
<td>Recruiting advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising Seminar (faculty and staff)</td>
<td>Seminars oversubscribed</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Year Learning Community</td>
<td>Seminar and CI-H scheduling conflicts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of Minority Education</td>
<td>High student interest in Course 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of the First Year</td>
<td>Reg Day challenges - absentee advisors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Less faculty communication over summer</td>
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First Year Advising as a key priority

Key needs identified in Spring 2018 Designing the First Year (DFY) class:

1. More support for choosing a major / encouraging intellectual exploration

2. Advising, advising, advising (vital in the first year and beyond)

3. Feeling inspired by a topic / love of learning

4. More flexibility, fewer GIRs to enable above
Previous reports, studies and recommendations

Reports & memos
- 1977 Report of the President and the Chancellor Issue
- 1997 CUP report
- 2005 CUP report
- 2016 MHH memo

Student recommendations
- UA Advising subcommittee and 2018 FYE class

Pilots & assessments
- 2011 Advising Pilot (CUP supported)
- 2015-2018 analysis (UAAP survey)
- 2017 IR meta analysis

Common Recommendations
1. Clearly identified roles of support, extend support beyond a single person
2. Expectations of advisor, mentor and student engagement
3. Proper training for entire network
4. Standardization of practices, easy to navigate for all
Piloting the advising network

~100 Students enrolled in “Network Advising”

OFY Course selection

Associate Advisor
Peer Mentoring

Faculty Mentoring
Study Introduction

Faculty Interviews

OFY Staff Interviews

All students sent the survey
Discussion groups with students
## SURVEY QUESTION CATEGORIES

### First-year students
- Ability to discuss various topics with advisor
- Ability of advisor to write a recommendation
- Advisee preparation for meetings
- Advising match
- Communication with network
- Primary program strength
- Seminar experience
- Satisfaction with network

## INTERVIEW/DISCUSSION QUESTION CATEGORIES

### Faculty
- Motivation to be an advisor
- Primary role of an advisor
- Advising challenges & advantages
- Approach to advising
- Needs

### Office of the First Year
- Working with faculty mentor (pilot)
- Focus of advising conversations
- Needs
- Pilot vs. non-pilot experiences
- Pilot explanation to students

### First-year students
- Views on advising experience
- Primary role of an advisor
- Focus of advising conversations
- Relationship advising network after first year
All types of advising are well-represented in survey data

Top line = total #, bottom line = %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of advising received</th>
<th>Survey participation status</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>232</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>580</td>
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Note: Pearson chisq = 10.0078  Pr = 0.01
The **primary strengths** of the first-year advising program revolve around the **seminar experience** and the **help provided by the various advising network members**.
It took me a while to realize, you know, **you go in thinking, ‘Oh well, if I offer to take these guys to dinner, of course they’re going to take me up on that’** and then you know, all of a sudden you realize...they’re just not even showing up, even if they said they were going to come. So you kind of realize ‘OK, I got to adapt to that.’ You also realize that they don’t necessarily read their email. Or at least not read their email with the frequency you’d expect. **So you sort of all of a sudden say ‘OK, well now we have to go to Instant Messaging and other modes of communication to make sure they remember,’ ‘Oh, we were going to get together at this time or that.’** (Faculty)

I never felt a need to reach out to him for **non-school related things.** (Student)
I know that advising, upperclassman advisors, from what I’ve heard...can be more helpful to...making decisions about your major in general, because they’re advisors in your major, right? So, they have a little bit different role than first-year advisors. At least from what I gather. So that can be a lot more helpful, so...I should be able to get more assistance with more academics, because I don’t know, the first year, I guess I can easily figure out by yourself if you want to take like, I don’t know, which calculus you want to take. But I guess I feel like once you start trying to figure out...if you want to get to certain classes that are like, sort of have all these prerequisites, trying to figure out a path how to take those classes. I think that might be a little bit more something, more, like an advisor that knows more about your major might be able to help you with more. (Student)

Matching

I think the only thing I would say to change about it is if there’s a better way to sort of match student interest with their advisor. I think it would make things work better. And maybe that’s just hard because maybe 90 percent of the students say they want to do computer science and there’s not enough computer science advisors, right? I suspect that’s an issue. (Faculty)
Should the 2019-20 pilot be implemented?

**The student perspective:**

It was not a different experience than their traditionally-advised peers but clarity on the roles of the OFY advisor and faculty mentor would be needed.

**The OFY advisor perspective:**

The advising component was not much different than advising their primary advisees. However, coordinating with the faculty mentors would require one face-to-face meeting, clear guidelines on advisor and mentor roles, and guidance on how best to communicate with their faculty mentors.

**The faculty mentor perspective:**

All agreed that, in the future, mentors would need access to WebSIS, a few required, non-course related meetings, and matching mentees with mentors in their anticipated major.
Recommendations

**Matching**
- Assign advisor and AA in anticipated major
- Survey advising network members and incoming class on their expectations

**Messaging**
- Emphasize the value of advising
- Remind faculty first-year students may need more outreach than other students
- Provide incentives to faculty
- Offer clear guidelines to each network member

**Structure**
- Assign OFY to advising logistics and faculty advisors to mentoring (which is required)
- Front-load meetings at the beginning of the first semester
- Incorporate selected departments (e.g., Math, Physics, etc.) to assist in advising students
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Potential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matching</strong></td>
<td><strong>Potential</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Placement of seminar in 9 discovery units allowed for greater participation in FAS</td>
<td>Revisit feedback loop/standardized assessment practices for advising</td>
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<td>Removal of sophomore standing - students stay with advisor for the year</td>
<td>Better inform advisors of the academic rules that students are operating under (dashboard passed to future advisors)</td>
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<td>Encouraged faculty to increase enrollment in FAS with other primary advisors</td>
<td>Better matching using affinity groups - ex) First Gen, ROTC, URM, International</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Messaging</strong></td>
<td><strong>Messaging</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Updated advisor guidebook and Canvas course with meeting frequency guidance and conversation guides</td>
<td>Incentivize faculty who mentor and advise</td>
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<td>Increased communication over summer with incoming students and OFY</td>
<td>Advisor &amp; Associate Advisor introduction &amp; conversations over the summer before orientation</td>
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<td>Course selection process starting earlier</td>
<td>Boosting the role of the Associate Advisor to provide additional peer support</td>
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<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
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<td>Summer Slack community for questions facilitated by OFY and Orientation Leaders</td>
<td>Additional staff in OFY so each incoming student has a formal connection</td>
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<td>OFY staff liaisons with academic departments</td>
<td>More connection with sophomores to help with handoff in fall to departments</td>
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<td>Department Orientations</td>
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Thank you!

Office of the First Year
Faculty Advisors
First Year Students
Q&A

- We will begin by answering previously submitted questions first: http://bit.ly/advisingquestions
- Then proceed to open response Q&A

If you would like a copy of the report, please indicate your interest in the chat with “report: your e-mail”

- Ex: report: laleman@mit.edu