New insights & directions for MIT first-year advising

Lauren Pouchak| Director of Special Projects, OVC

Elizabeth Young | Associate Dean & Director, First-Year Advising & Programming, OFY

Melissa Barnett | Associate Director for Research & Evaluation, TLL

Team Members

Office of the First Year
Elizabeth Young

Teaching and Learning Lab
Lourdes Alemán
Melissa Barnett
Dan Nocivelli

Office of the Vice Chancellor
Lauren Pouchak
Kate Weishaar
Grace Kim
Greta Farrell

Agenda

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

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Current first year advising options provide choices and challenges

Choices

Traditional (faculty and staff)

Advising Seminar (faculty and staff)

First Year Learning Community

Office of Minority Education

Office of the First Year

Challenges

Recruiting advisors

Seminars oversubscribed

Seminar and CI-H scheduling conflicts

High student interest in Course 6

Reg Day challenges - absentee advisors

Less faculty communication over summer

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
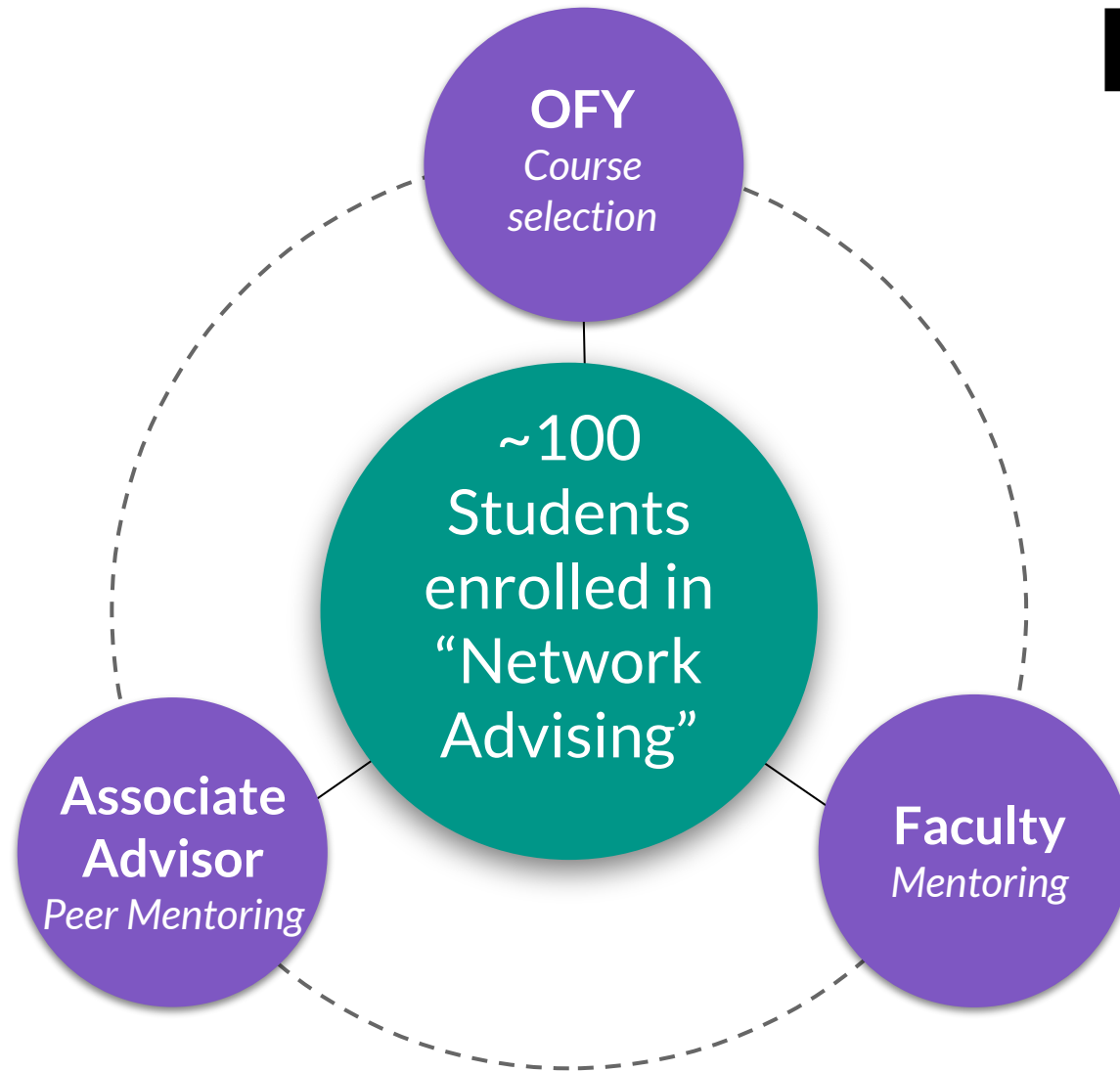- [UA Advising subcommittee](#) and [2018 FYE class](#)

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

OFY
Course selection

~100 Students enrolled in "Network Advising"

Associate Advisor
Peer Mentoring

Faculty
Mentoring

Study Introduction

Faculty Interviews

OFY Staff Interviews

360

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 = %

Type of advising received	Survey participation status		TOTAL
	No	Yes	
Pilot	64	45	109
	12.1	7.8	9.8
Seminar	172	232	404
	32.6	40.0	36.5
Traditional	292	303	595
	55.3	52.2	53.7
TOTAL	528	580	1108
	100.00	100.0	100.0

Note: Pearson chi2(2) = 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.

Differing Expectations

[I]t 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

Implementation

Current

Potential

Matching

Current
- Placement of seminar in 9 discovery units allowed for greater participation in FAS
- Removal of sophomore standing - students stay with advisor for the year
- Encouraged faculty to increase enrollment in FAS with other primary advisors

Potential
- Revisit feedback loop/standardized assessment practices for advising
- Better inform advisors of the academic rules that students are operating under (dashboard passed to future advisors)
- Better matching using affinity groups - ex) First Gen, ROTC, URM, International

Messaging

Current
- Updated advisor guidebook and Canvas course with meeting frequency guidance and conversation guides
- Increased communication over summer with incoming students and OFY
- Course selection process starting earlier

Potential
- Incentivize faculty who mentor and advise
- Advisor & Associate Advisor introduction & conversations over the summer before orientation
- Boosting the role of the Associate Advisor to provide additional peer support
- Create roadmaps for advising similar to academic roadmaps

Structure

Current
- Summer Slack community for questions facilitated by OFY and Orientation Leaders
- OFY staff liaisons with academic departments
- Department Orientations

Potential
- Additional staff in OFY so each incoming student has a formal connection
- More connection with sophomores to help with handoff in fall to departments

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**