Virtual Group Advising: Engaging in Alternative Advising Strategies to Support Students Amid A Global Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

VIRTUAL GROUP ADVISING: ENGAGING IN ALTERNATIVE ADVISING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AMID A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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Northern Illinois University, 2021
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Considering the evolving needs of non-traditional students and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become more critical to explore the use of technology in advising. This study aimed to explore the experiences of students who participated in virtual group advising and examined the dynamics of this virtual group setting related to student preparedness and engagement. Three themes that emerged during data analysis were a) increased feelings of academic preparedness, b) increased social interaction among peers during and after advising, and c) positive perceptions of using technology during advising. This study found that while virtual group advising may not be meant to replace the traditional individual advising setting, it has valuable components not attainable in the one-on-one environment. These components support student success, increase social interaction among peers, and make advising more convenient for many students. When implemented effectively, virtual group advising has the power to positively transform traditional advising practices.
VIRTUAL GROUP ADVISING: ENGAGING IN ALTERNATIVE ADVISING STRATEGIES 
TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AMID A GLOBAL PANDEMIC 

BY 

BETHANY GEISEMAN 
@2021 Bethany Geiseman 

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL 
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Kathryn Jaekel
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DEDICATION

This body of work is dedicated to my family who traveled this journey with me, celebrating the joys and enduring the stressful times. Most importantly to God, who is the source of my talent, strength, and wisdom. A special shout-out to the nay-sayers who thought I would never accomplish anything great in life and to those whose presence was nothing more than a hinderance, stumbling block, and distraction. You have made me better, stronger, and more resilient.
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# Abstract

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Academic advisors are essential for promoting student success by assisting in ways that encourage students to be active participants in activities both inside and outside of the classroom. Advisors are often the first people with whom students meet and with whom they maintain the most frequent contact (Kuh, 2008). Research supports the many positive impacts that advising has on student persistence and retention (Hutson & Bloom, 2006; Swecker et al., 2013; Young et al., 2013). However, it is likely that in addition to meeting with students, advisors are tasked with other responsibilities such as teaching first-year seminars, holding workshops, serving on committees, attending institutional events, and participating in other duties that take time away from direct advising with students (Robins, 2013). As a result, the amount of time and commitment to serving large student populations can easily exceed traditional office hours.

Advising requires that advisors cultivate relationships with students and regularly follow up with them to monitor progress and address challenges (Pierce, 2016). However, this can become quite challenging when there are many students and only a few advisors. According to a 2011 survey conducted by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the median case load of advisees per full-time professional advisor was 296 (Carlstrom & Miller 2013). While this may be helpful in knowing an average caseload size, the study also reported a variation in this number based on the size of the institution and the type of institution reviewed (Carlstrom & Miller 2013). One of the limitations of the National Advising Survey was
that it failed to account for varying student needs. While quantitative research attaches a specific number to advising caseloads, the Council for the Advancement of Standards of Higher Education (CAS, 2018) argued that mode of delivery, advising approach, additional advisor responsibilities, student needs, and time required for advising are all factors to consider when determining advising caseloads.

Research on advising and retention rates has shown the positive impacts that face-to-face advising has on the number of students retained each semester (Creamer, 1980; Habley, 1981; Schwebel et al., 2012; Swecker et al., 2013). However, little research has been conducted on the impact of virtual advising. Waldner et al. (2011) identify some reasons advisors should consider virtual advising, stating that virtual advising may enhance advising efficiency by saving time and allowing students on-demand access to advisors. Most important to this study, the above referenced researchers add that virtual advising increases student retention and academic success. Furthermore, it benefits traditional students who are more likely to be comfortable using technology.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and understand the experiences of undergraduate art majors related to their virtual group advising session. Specifically, this study examined participants’ views on how virtual group advising contributes to academic preparedness, interpersonal connections, and the integration of technology in advising. Components of this study focus on collaboration in a group setting and engagement in the social learning process. This study developed a set of common themes across students’ experiences that inform how advisors might implement virtual group advising as an alternative advising method.
Findings from the qualitative case study will apprise academic advisors of the perceived benefits of implementing virtual group advising, while also addressing any common challenges or barriers students encountered. This study also provides considerations about how to enhance group advising in a virtual setting. Most importantly students’ experiences will be used to change and transform the traditional structure of academic advising.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study is What are students’ experiences related to virtual group advising? The following questions guided this study:

1. In what ways do students engage during virtual group advising?
2. What do students perceive as advantages and challenges in virtual group advising?
3. What are students’ perceptions on the use of technology in advising?

Review of Literature

Academic advising supports students’ academic, personal, and career interests while helping them make meaning of their experiences. Students’ social, cultural, and academic backgrounds shape their experiences, as they interpret them. (Drake, 2015). Due to students’ diverse experiences and influences, there is no single standard approach to advising. In fact, Duller et al. (1997) found that advisors should utilize different approaches based on students’ needs and perhaps demographics. Three long standing approaches to advising are prescriptive advising, developmental advising, and intrusive or proactive advising.

This literature review provides an overview of traditional approaches to advising followed by a discussion of the use of virtual group advising as an alternative advising method.
The focus is on developmental advising strategies that encourage students to be active participants in the planning and tracking of their academic progress. Potential challenges and barriers that may occur when implementing virtual group advising are also addressed.

**Traditional Approaches to Advising**

The traditional approach to advising is prescriptive advising. In prescriptive environments, the advisor, assumed as the expert, focuses on students’ limitations based on past performance (Crookston, 1972, 1994). Crookston describes the prescriptive relationship as a doctor-patient model in which the student goes to the expert for answers. Therefore, students view the advisor as the authoritative figure who has control and often bears the burden of responsibility for outcomes that are not favorable to the student (Crookston, 1972, 1994).

Developmental advising views advisors as teachers who assist students in decision making skills and focus on their potential for growth. Furthermore, it is a shared learning experience in which both advisor and student work together to set goals and evaluate progress (Crookston 1972, 1994; Drake, 2015). Unlike prescriptive advising, developmental advising promotes a shared responsibility, allowing students to contribute thoughts, make choices, and maintain control over their academic and personal endeavors.

As approaches to advising transform to best meet the needs of students, the idea of intrusive advising was introduced. Intrusive advising, now referred to as proactive advising, asserts that advisors reach out to students rather than wait for students to initiate the interaction. Even in its earliest stages, Glennen (1975, 1976) found an increase in student performance and fewer students were on academic probation through implementing intrusive advising. Additionally, a decrease in the number of withdrawals indicated students were completing their
coursework at a higher rate. While there are several additional approaches to advising that have emerged over time, it remains evident that academic advisors are essential for promoting student success.

Group Advising

Group advising is a model in which the advisor teaches students to gain a better understanding of their educational expectations and requirements (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Furthermore, it provides relevant strategies that promote student success. Group advising can be effective in sharing important information with many students at once rather than repeating the same information to individual students (King, 2008). New student orientation, the enrollment period, the withdrawal period, and just before graduation are a few examples of times when group advising can be advantageous for an advisor to share important information to larger groups of students (Ryan, 2015). Group advising practices are growing in importance and frequency and, when successfully implemented, can benefit students as well as advisors (Woolston & Ryan, 2015).

Students and advisors can benefit from group advising in numerous ways. Group advising allows students to interact with others who share common interests and provides opportunities for students to establish relationships with their peers (King, 2008). Moreover, it promotes an environment in which students can engage in conversation, ask questions, and share concerns with others who can understand their issues (King, 2008). Group advising can also show that advisors are approachable and helpful by allowing them to provide access, support, and information to groups of students during integral moments within a given semester (Ryan, 2015). The experience can also open communication between advisors and students, which in
turn can increase student participation in one-on-one advising when the need arises (Woolston & Ryan, 2015).

Implementing Group Advising

Creating a successful group advising session includes thorough preparation, clear delivery, and follow-up (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). In planning for group advising, the advisor should consider the timing at which the information will be shared. The session should include valuable and relevant information at a purposeful point in the semester in a location that is easily accessible and functional for group advising (King, 2008; Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Advisors should also plan to send multiple notifications to students in a variety of ways (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Advisors may opt to use email, bulletin boards, residence hall personnel, instructors, student newspapers, and listservs to inform students of the meeting. Reminders should be sent to students within a week of the event and again the day of the event (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Successful group advising is predicated on strategic planning followed by consistent and ongoing communication.

The delivery method used during group advising is also a key in creating a successful experience. The advisor should be rehearsed and knowledgeable in communicating the planned thoughts and ideas for the session in an interactive way. Furthermore, students should be provided with a clear agenda that informs them of the goals for the session and doubles as a tool to keep the advisor on track (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). During delivery, the advisor should also provide students with engaging materials and handouts, so students have a resource to follow during the session as well as something for reference when they get home (King, 2008; Woolston & Ryan, 2015). It is also important to allow time for students to ask questions rather than waiting
until the end when the advisor might run out of time (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Students will not typically feel comfortable interrupting a presentation to ask questions, so it is important for the advisor to frequently ask students what is on their mind or if they have questions (Woolston & Ryan, 2015).

In closing the session, the advisor should encourage students to follow up with him or her (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). The advisor may have opted to prepare a registration or sign-in sheet for students to complete on arrival. The document can later be used by the advisor to follow up with students, but ideally group advising will generate the demand for one-on-one appointments. Therefore, the advisor must intentionally set aside time to allow for students to schedule an appointment to follow up, if necessary (Woolston & Ryan, 2015).

While group advising has many benefits, Woolston and Ryan (2015) have also identified potential challenges that may arise. First, advisors who have not developed strong presentation and public speaking skills that include eye contact, voice projection, animation, stage presence, and clear dictation may quickly lose their audience. Secondly, advisors may need to handle negative group dynamics and will need to be equipped to quickly navigate tensions. Researchers have identified humor, respect, and professionalism as ways to address rudeness and disrespect. Lastly, student attendance has been pinpointed by Woolston and Ryan (2015) as another potential group advising challenge. To increase attendance and avoid wasting time and resources, advisors might implement three methods. These include making group advising mandatory, so registration holds are only removed after attendance, refusing students individual appointments until they have attended a group advising session, or promoting the idea that group advising is a good time investment for students (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Overall, group advising has the potential to create an environment in which important information can be shared among groups
of students. Furthermore, it provides a platform for allowing students to collectively share experiences, problem-solve, and support one another.

**Virtual Advising**

Technology serves as another mode of advising delivery and has been found to elicit favorable feedback from students (Luna & Medina, 2007). The use of technology can be an important advising tool when it also enhances the relationship between the student and the advisor and serves beyond a basic level of information giving (Leonard, 2008). Virtual advising methods are also low-cost and can be beneficial to institutions facing reduced budgets and limited resources (Anderson & Meyer, 2017). Therefore, rather than reducing services to students due to budget cuts, advisors have an opportunity to implement new delivery formats while considering students’ evolving needs (Jordan, 2000).

Email, text message, instant messaging, social media, and school specific systems are common avenues for delivering online advising (Applegate & Hartleroad, 2001). However, Ohrablo (2016) cautions that when using platforms without video options, students cannot gather visual cues from the advisor. This can result in missed opportunities for students and advisors to develop a positive advising relationship. When using video, the advisor does not have to rely on tone of voice or written word to make inferences about how the student is feeling. Likewise, the student can observe the level at which the advisor is concerned and engaged (Ohrablo, 2016). As a result, research supports the effectiveness of incorporating the use of video in online advising sessions to provide high quality services that allow face-to-face interactions with students (Anderson & Meyer, 2017).
E-advising refers to the use of video during advising and offers the opportunity for advisors to provide highly quality services to students with conflicting work schedules or family obligations that do not allow them to attend advising appointments during regular office hours (Waldner et al., 2011). E-advising allows face-to-face communication in real time, is personalized for students’ needs, and most effectively replicates in-person advising (Ohrablo, 2016; Waldner et al., 2011). Additionally, Waldner, et al. (2011) identified three key benefits for students regarding e-advising. First, it removes barriers that might prevent students from participating in face-to-face advising, like scheduling conflicts, disabilities, transportation, and other issues. Second, it affords students remote access to resources and, finally, provides nontraditional avenues for students to access their advisor. These benefits increase the likelihood students will seek advising throughout their degree program, consequently expanding the rate of student success, engagement, enrollment, and retention. By promoting greater access to advisors through video methods and by providing immediate access to resources, e-advising improves advising quality, accessibility, and flexibility (Waldner et al., 2011).

**Implementing Virtual Advising**

Some advisors have begun to offer online advising to better meet the needs of students and allow them to chat virtually from a remote location (Barron & Powell, 2014); however, there are many components to implementing such a system. Advisors should heavily advertise that virtual advising is an option. Some effective ways to advertise include inserting a Skype name or screenname into the signature line of work emails and contacting students personally to let them know they can sign up for a virtual appointment (Todaro, 2011). In preparing for the online appointment, advisors should first assess the environment by choosing one that is quiet and free
from background distractions. Second, advisors should ensure that other advising work is put aside, allowing the advisor to better focus on the student(s). Third, the advisor should organize all resources that needed during an advising session, avoiding the need to pause or leave momentarily (Anderson & Meyer, 2017; Todaro, 2011). It is important to remember to smile and be mindful of non-verbal messages communicated between you and the student during the conversation. Additionally, it will take some practice, the key is to be as natural as possible and treat the online session like a face-to-face session (Todaro, 2011).

When incorporating technology into current practice, challenges are inevitable, and e-advising is not exempt from its share of potential frustrations. Students and advisors alike may contend with slow connection and download speeds as well as interruptions in connection that can quickly make a frustrating online advising experience (Waldner et al., 2011). There is also the potential issue of maintaining confidentiality in sessions in which video and audio are being used (Anderson & Meyer, 2017). Advisors should be especially aware of their surroundings and the spaces they use to conduct private conversations.

**Summary**

Existing literature supports the importance of advising and the role it plays in student academic learning and success. With the continued demand on advisors and the need to meet with increasing numbers of students, current research has begun to explore non-traditional forms of advising to connect with students more effectively. However, there is little about students’ perceptions in virtual group advising settings and how student involvement in group advising contributes to academic readiness.
Research on group advising supports that when implemented properly, it can enhance the advising experience by incorporating peer support in a group setting. By, incorporating technology in a group advising experience, advisors can reach a larger number of students in a way that is conducive to students’ schedules. However, qualitative studies are necessary in understanding students’ perceptions of the virtual group advising experience. Results will inform current advising practices and may lead to a revolutionary shift in how advising occurs, creating a more collaborative advising community among students.

Theoretical Framework

Engagement theory is the underpinning framework that guided this study. The premise of engagement theory supports that students participating in technology-based learning should interact with peers in relevant activities and engage in meaningful tasks. (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). The three components of engagement theory rest on the pillars of relate, create, and donate (Kearsley & Shneiderman). Engagement theory was applied to virtual group advising and the pillars of relate, create, and donate served as the basis of data collection to find common themes among students’ experiences related to virtual group advising.

Relate Pillar

The relate pillar focuses on developing interpersonal connections. According to Kearsley & Shneiderman (1998), emphasizing team efforts that increase communication build social skills that help students effectively verbalize their thoughts and ideas. They also suggest that collaborative learning promotes proficiency in planning, management, and finding solutions.
Active participation and collaboration with peers increase learning and motivation to learn (Astin, 1999; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998).

**Create Pillar**

The create pillar addresses the need for students to be actively involved. Students who are physically and cognitively engaged invest in processes such as creativity, decision making, and problem solving while maintaining an awareness of their experiences (Astin, 1999; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). The ability to create allows students to take ownership of their learning by engaging in a purposeful activity in which they can problem solve by applying their own ideas (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998).

**Donate Pillar**

The donate pillar directs students to work collaboratively. This allows them to freely offer thoughts, opinions, and advice to others. Sharing learning makes an authentic learning experience while increasing student motivation and satisfaction (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998).

While engagement theory is an aged framework, the use of technology has increased in many environments, including higher education. The need for reform in the way that advisors conduct advising sessions is overdue and implementing technology is one change that could have a positive impact on students. A recent study by Gunuc and Kuzu (2014) found that technology has a significant positive impact on student engagement and has attributed to increased motivation for students. Further, using technology in advising can help students cultivate a deeper understanding of academic requirements and promote authentic interactions (Hu, 2020).
Therefore, using engagement theory to guide virtual group advising provides advisors with a framework to explore student experiences through the context of collaboration, authentic tasks, and shared learning. These investigations are extremely important as overall student satisfaction and engagement lead to greater participation in learning and increased student engagement (Astin, 1998; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999). Based on previous research, it is likely that students who are satisfied with their virtual group advising experience will seek future opportunities to share their learning (Astin, 1998; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999).

Research Design

A social constructivist paradigm guides this study. This philosophical approach fits nicely into this research design because of the emphasis on participants’ views and the social construction of learning (Creswell, 2007). During this study, the participants will work collaboratively in a virtual group advising session. Each group will consist of up to 10 students who share the same major and area of emphasis. The group advising platform will allow students to discuss their major and general education requirements and construct their semester schedule of classes with others. The researcher will facilitate conversations by asking open ended questions for students to explore. The participants will share their thoughts and ideas to problem solve issues and answer questions related to academic planning. Grounding this study in a social constructivist approach will allow for understanding how participants construct and make meaning of their experiences.
Methodological Approach

Case studies focus on a system, program, process, or relationship within a bounded system (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2013). This descriptive case study focuses on the experiences of art majors at a four-year institution. Data collection occurred four weeks prior to the opening of the enrollment period for Fall 2021. It explored the experiences of students who participated in virtual group advising.

Although case studies can use a variety of data collection methods, this study used data gathered through participant interviews and a focus group to understand participants’ experiences related to virtual group advising. A case study is relevant for this type of research approach because it provides rich descriptions of the students’ experiences and quotations from the interviews (Hancock & Algozzine (2017). Additionally, analysis of the students’ experiences was categorized into common themes related to virtual group advising.

Research Site

This study was conducted at a four-year accredited research institution in the Midwest. Almost half of its 17,000 students identify as non-white; however, there are ongoing initiatives to increase diversity across campus, particularly among the Latino population. Increased Latino enrollment give the institution recognition as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and secure additional support and funding for Latinos. Also included in its diverse student population are almost 1,000 international students from 103 countries.

The institution is comprised of seven degree granting colleges that award bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, and/or law degrees. Students enrolled can choose from 63 undergraduate
majors, 87 graduate majors, and seven pre-professional programs. Students are encouraged to be active and engaged on campus. Students can get involved through diversity centers, sports, and student organizations.

The university follows a developmental model of advising. Students are encouraged by their advisor to meet on an individual basis to discuss academic progress, educational goals, and career planning. Advising is also viewed as a shared responsibility in which the student contacts the advisor, and the advisor provides information, referrals, and encouragement, while monitoring progress toward graduation.

Participants and Recruitment

Purposive sampling was used for this study to recruit individuals who best met the needs of the research design and could provide information relevant to the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While any Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) major or art education major (BSED) could choose to participate in virtual group advising, only a sample of that population was selected for data collection.

Participants for this study were chosen based on major. This was especially important because the researcher needed to be knowledgeable about major course requirements and curriculum. For this study, any student who was majoring in a BFA or BSED program in the School of Art and Design had the opportunity to participate. The BFA offers degrees in the areas of Design, 2D Studio Art, and 3D Studio Art. Each degree has areas of emphasis students also declare. Emphases offered in Design are photography, time arts, and visual communications. 2d studio art emphases are illustration, drawing, painting, and printmaking and 3d studio art includes fiber, ceramics, sculpture, and metals. The BSED majors pursuing Art Education were
also included in this study because, like BFA majors, they follow a cohort style program in which major courses are offered in sequence. The total number of students eligible to participate in this study based on major was approximately 280 students.

Major requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.) can vary greatly depending on the students’ interests and career goals. Based on the nature of the highly individualized structure of the degree, it has been determined that B.A. and B.S majors would not be good candidates for this study. B.A. and B.S. majors were still offered one-on-one appointments with their advisor rather than the opportunity to participate in virtual group advising sessions.

A recruitment email was sent to students to notify them of the study. A scheduling link was also provided for those who interested in participating in a virtual group advising session. The participants were sent a confirmation email and a reminder email to ensure an adequate sample size. Since there are over 280 students who qualified as candidates for this study, it was determined that there would not be an issue with finding students to participate in the interviews. However, in the event there was no initial interest, the researcher was going to randomly select from those who participated in a virtual advising session and reach out to them individually.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher did not discuss anything pertaining to a student’s grades, cumulative grade point average (GPA), or other information related to academic standing during group advising. By participating in virtual group advising students were consenting to openly disclose major, area of emphasis, and discussion surrounding choice of classes and enrollment for the upcoming semester. With the permission of the participants, interviews were conducted in a private setting and used only for the purpose of this study.
Data Collection

Consistent with data collection procedures for case studies, semi-structured qualitative interviews with a target number of six to eight participants were the primary tool for collecting data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study included two individual interviews per participant. The first interview was conducted to understand the students’ current advising experiences. After participating in a virtual group advising session, the same students were asked to participate in a second interview. Semi-structured open-ended questions were used to gain an in-depth understanding of students’ perceptions as they related to their experience in a virtual group advising session. Conducting interviews was helpful for gathering information because it allowed time for the participant to provide a rich description of their experience, while allowing the researcher to maintain the flow of questioning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A limitation of this type of data collection is that participant responses are based on the individual’s point of view. Furthermore, the interviews did not take place in the same setting and the participant had to recall information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Once data saturation was met, transcripts were reviewed to identify themes or topics that continued to arise during individual interviews. Using them as guide, focus group questions were developed to deepen understanding related to participants’ virtual group advising experience. Next, the study will seek participants to engage with others in a focus group. Per the guidelines for conducting a full focus group, it consisted of six to ten participants who shared their thoughts and responded to the views of others (Litosseliti, 2003). The focus group was facilitated by the researcher who asked open-ended questions to prompt detailed descriptions of the participants’ experiences. Furthermore, probing questions were asked to gain deeper levels of insight.
regarding their virtual group advising session. To ensure a meaningful focus group, the researcher encouraged participants to interact with others and responded to diverse perspectives (Litosseliti, 2003). While focus groups can elicit valuable data, they are not without limitations. Given the nature of focus groups, they can be time consuming, facilitators may be confronted with challenging group dynamics, and participants may feel motivated to share what will please the researcher (Litosseliti, 2003).

An interview protocol was developed, and virtual interviews were conducted, and audio recorded. A secondary audio device also recorded the interviews in the event one device failed. As suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the researcher jotted memos during the interview to record significant information. Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed to identify reoccurring themes in student responses.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis allows qualitative researchers to identify key words or phrases that can be grouped into broader themes (Jones et al., 2013). Consistent with descriptive case studies, the goal was to gain a deep understanding of the participants’ experiences with virtual group advising. The method used in this study to analyze data is referred to as coding. Coding allows researchers to organize data into categories based on commonalities (Saldaña, 2013). Qualitative data were collected and coded using Saldaña’s method of first and second cycle coding. During first cycle coding, data were segmented into categories and labeled with a preliminary code (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña). Second cycle coding examined similarities and differences among the preliminary codes to develop an overarching final code (Saldaña). Information was categorized into five to seven themes related to the participants’ virtual advising
experience. The themes provided rich interpretations of the participants’ experiences with virtual group advising and served as the findings of this study.

Criteria for Quality

High quality research addresses trustworthiness. Trustworthiness refers to the level of confidence in research findings and the implications the findings have on future actions (Jones, et al., 2013). Particular to case study design, researchers use rich, thick descriptions to convey findings and increase the quality of research. These descriptions are detailed, expressive, and explicit explanations of the study (Jones et. al., 2013). When detailed descriptions provide multiple perspectives surrounding a theme, the results become more apparent (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study gathered information from several students to determine underlying themes related to the experiences and perceptions of students who participated in virtual group advising.

Another method used throughout this study was member checking. Member checking ensures validity by asking participants to determine if the descriptions and themes were accurate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Emerging themes generated from individual interviews and the focus group were emailed to participants. Participants were asked to verify the accuracy of the data and comment on the researcher’s interpretations of their experiences.

Positional Reflexivity

Positional reflexivity challenges the researcher to examine factors such as race, gender, values, culture, class, sexuality, and Socio-economic status (SES) that might shape how the research is designed or influence findings (Cousin, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Cousin
(2010) provides questions a researcher should consider when engaging in reflexive thought. Two of the questions that pertain most to this type of case study ask about power relationships between the participants and the researcher as well as the researcher’s emotional investment (Cousin, 2010).

It is especially important that I, as the researcher, continually examined power structures throughout this study and when conducting interviews. Reflecting on the relationship between the researcher and the participant helped me understand how the connection might influence my interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While I have already developed a strong rapport with the participants, I also serve as their academic advisor. It was possible the participants might feel the advisor-advisee relationship is a safe place to be transparent and find it empowering to disclose information about their advising experiences. However, other participants might have been intimidated by transparency or fear judgement and retaliation. Throughout this study, I conducted interviews that allowed students to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences. I reiterated that the students’ responses were not being analyzed to determine their satisfaction with advising or with me as their advisor but rather focusing on their experiences throughout virtual group advising.

I also must be diligent about reflecting on emotional investment. Since I am familiar with best practices for advising, I may have had preconceived assumptions regarding the outcomes of the study. I needed to remain neutral in reporting student feedback rather than look for information that supported my assumptions. There was also an increased level of investment because findings may impact future advising practice.
Academic advising is an essential support service offered to students. With a focus on developmental advising strategies, students and advisors work together to create an ongoing plan for success. When advising is offered in a group setting, it creates an environment in which students can actively collaborate and interact with peers. Furthermore, the ability to add technology to the group setting through virtual platforms increases accessibility for students to regularly participate in advising.
CHAPTER 2
VIRTUAL GROUP ADVISING: ENGAGING IN ALTERNATIVE ADVISING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AMIDST A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Abstract

This study sought to explore the experiences of students who participated in virtual group advising and explored its impacts as it related to student preparedness and engagement. A total of 12 undergraduate art majors participated in this case study, which used semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The findings identified participants who felt a) increased feelings of academic preparedness, b) increased social interactions among peers during and after advising, and c) positive perceptions of using technology during advising. Recommendations that emerge from this study include consideration of issues such as confidentiality, technology, uses of strategic scheduling, and how to effectively facilitate discussion.
Introduction

Positive rates of persistence and retention are just two of the many impacts that advising has on students in higher education (Hutson & Bloom, 2006; Swecker et al., 2013; Young et al., 2013). To be effective, advisors must build relationships with their advisees, maintain contact to track progress and assist students through challenges they might encounter each semester (Pierce, 2016). Academic advisors are often the first point of contact for students and with whom they meet most often (Kuh, 2008). Advisors are essential in promoting student success by frequently meeting with students and encouraging them to actively participate in their education.

Research on the relationship between advising and retention rates has shown favorable outcomes for students who participate in face-to-face individual advising (Creamer, 1980; Habley, 1981; Schwebel et al., 2012; Swecker et al., 2013). However, it is important that advisors seek new and innovative ways to engage students through virtual means. Waldner et al. (2011) identified reasons advisors should consider virtual advising, suggesting it may enhance advising efficiency and allow students on-demand access to advisors. Most important to this study, virtual advising increased student retention, supported academic success, and benefited traditional students who were more likely to be comfortable in using technology (Waldner et al., 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the experiences of undergraduate art majors related to their virtual group advising session. The central research question for this study was: What are students’ experiences related to virtual group advising? The following questions guided this study:

1. In what ways do students engage during virtual group advising?
2. What do students perceive as advantages and challenges in virtual group advising?

3. What are students’ perceptions on the use of technology in advising?

Specifically, this study aimed to understand participants’ views of how virtual group advising contributes to academic preparedness, interpersonal connections, and the integration of technology in advising. Components of this study focused on group collaboration and engagement in the social learning process.

Findings from the qualitative case study included participants’ reports of increased feelings of academic preparedness, increased social interactions with peers both during and after their academic advising sessions, and positive perceptions of the use of technology during advising sessions. Further, implications for future research and implementation are also discussed.

Review of Literature

Academic advising is designed to support students’ academically, personally, and professionally while helping them make meaning of their experiences. The way in which students interpret their experiences are influenced by social, cultural, and academic factors (Drake, 2015). Due to diversity in students’ experiences and influences, there is no single or standard approach to advising. In fact, Duller et al. (1997) found that students’ needs, and demographics may determine which approach advisors should utilize. Three traditional approaches to advising are prescriptive advising, developmental advising, and intrusive or proactive advising.

In prescriptive advising, the advisor, viewed as the expert, focuses on limitations based on students’ past academic outcomes (Crookston, 1972, 1994). During developmental advising,
the advisor and student share learning experiences by collectively setting goals and evaluating progress. This approach views advisors as teachers who assist in making decisions and focuses on the students’ capacity for growth (Crookston 1972, 1994; Drake, 2015). Unlike prescriptive advising, developmental advising advocates that students share thoughts, make choices, and maintain control over academic and personal journeys. Lastly, intrusive, or proactive advising, asserts that advisors initiate interaction with the students. Even in its earliest stages, Glennen (1975, 1976) found that intrusive advising helped to increase student performance and resulted in fewer students on academic probation. Additionally, the number of student withdrawals decreased, suggesting that students were completing coursework at a higher rate. While additional advising approaches have emerged over time, it is evident that academic advisors are crucial in promoting student success and the uses of these approaches can greatly impact students’ academic and social success.

**Group Advising**

Group advising is a model in which advisors teach students to better understand their educational expectations and requirements for graduation (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Furthermore, it provides relevant strategies that promote student success, increases opportunities for students to interact and establish relationships with peers, and it promotes a socially engaging environment (King, 2008). Group advising allows the sharing of important information among a group rather than repeating the information multiple times to individual students (King, 2008). The importance and frequency of group advising is a growing practice and when implemented successfully it can benefit both students and advisors. (Woolston & Ryan, 2015).
While group advising has many benefits, potential challenges may arise. Some of these may include a) advisors having underdeveloped presentation skills resulting in loss of audience, b) diversity in groups creating challenging group dynamics, and c) poor student attendance (Woolston & Ryan, 2015). Overall, when group advising is conducted in a meaningful way, it has the potential to generate collaborative environments. Moreover, it provides a platform where students can collectively share experiences, problem-solve, and support one another.

**Virtual Advising**

Technology serves as another approach in advising and has received favorable feedback from students (Luna & Medina, 2007). Incorporating technology can be an important advising tool if it is more than a prescriptive advising opportunity. When students’ evolving needs are considered, implementing technology can enhance the student-advisor relationship (Jordan, 2000; Leonard, 2008). Additionally, it is cost effective for institutions facing reduced budgets and limited resources (Anderson & Meyer, 2017).

The use of video during advising can be effective for providing high quality online services that allow face-to-face interactions with students (Anderson & Meyer, 2017). Using video during virtual advising allows the student and advisor to gather visual cues on how the other is feeling and assess their level of engagement (Ohrablo, 2016). The use of video during advising, also referred to as e-advising, offers advising to students with conflicting work schedules or family obligations that hinders them from attending in-person appointments (Waldner et al., 2011). E-advising allows for face-to-face communication, can be personalized for student’s needs, and most closely replicates in-person advising (Ohrablo, 2016; Waldner et al., 2011). Some benefits of e-advising include removing barriers that might prevent students
from meeting with their advisor in a traditional face-to-face office meeting, affording students remote access to resources, and providing nontraditional avenues for students to access their advisor (Waldner et al., 2011). Combined, these benefits can increase the likelihood that students will meet with their advisor and, as a result, may experience increased student success, engagement, enrollment, and retention. By using technology to promote greater access to advisors and immediate access to resources, e-advising improves overall advising quality as well as, accessibility, and flexibility (Waldner et al., 2011).

Challenges can be expected when using technology and virtual advising is not exempt from these challenges. Students and advisors alike may confront connection glitches, slow download speeds, interruptions in connection, and delayed video that can quickly create a frustrating online advising experience (Waldner et al., 2011). There may also be increased challenges in maintaining confidentiality in sessions using video and audio. Advisors must be prepared to navigate issues with technology and make themselves available for follow up appointments to address matters that students cannot discuss in a group setting.

**Implementing Virtual Group Advising**

To better meet the needs of students, some advisors have begun to offer online advising allowing students to connect remotely and chat virtually (Barron & Powell, 2014). However, there are many considerations when implementing this method. Successful virtual group advising is predicated on strategic planning followed by consistent and on-going communication. Therefore, it is important that advisors who want to implement this strategy take advantage of the many resources that provide guidelines to a rewarding experience (Anderson & Meyer, 2017; King, 2008; Todaro, 2011; Waldner, et al., 2011; Woolston & Ryan, 2015).
Existing literature supports the importance of advising and its role in student learning and academic success. With the evolving needs of non-traditional and remote learners as well as barriers to advising due to Covid-19, current research must explore non-traditional forms of advising to connect with an increasing number of students more effectively. Further, qualitative studies are needed to understand students’ experiences related to virtual group advising to assess potential outcomes of implementing such an approach. Results will inform current advising practices and may lead to a dramatic shift in advising delivery, creating a more collaborative advising community among students.

Theoretical Framework

The underpinning framework that guided this study is engagement theory. This theory asserts that students who participate in technology-based learning should collaborate with peers in meaningful activities and engage in purposeful tasks (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). Three components exist within this theory and are related to specific skills and learning outcomes. Kearsley & Schneiderman (1998), describe these components noting first the idea of relate or interpersonal connections at which time students use communication and social skills to plan resulting in increased learning and motivation. Secondly, the create component where students engage in problem solving and decision making. Together these cognitive skills enhance engagement and create a sense of ownership. The third component is donate. An authentic learning experience develops as students donate and contribute. As a result, students demonstrate increased motivation to learn and increased satisfaction.

Through the lens of engagement theory, I analyzed data from the virtual group advising sessions. Specifically, in terms of how participants engaged and/or did not engage in the core
values of create and donate. This framework guided data collection to find common themes among the students’ experiences related to virtual group advising.

Research Design

This study was guided by a social constructivist paradigm. Its emphasis on participants’ views and the social construction of learning makes it a valid philosophical approach for this type of research (Creswell, 2007). During this study, the participants worked collaboratively with 4 to 10 other students and their advisor, who was also the researcher. The virtual group advising platform allowed students who share the same major and area of emphasis to discuss their academic requirements and develop their semester schedule of classes with others. The researcher facilitated conversations by asking students open-ended questions pertaining to class choice and upcoming milestones. The participants shared their thoughts and ideas to problem solve scheduling issues and answer questions related to academic planning, admission portfolio, and graduation, when appropriate. Grounding this study in a social constructivist approach allowed for understandings of how students use communication to collaborate with and support each other while making meaning of their experiences.

Methodological Approach

Participants for this descriptive case study were art majors at a four-year institution. For this research, a system, process, or relationship within a bounded system defines case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Jones et al., 2013). Consistent with case studies, this research provided rich descriptions of the students’ experiences and direct quotations from the
participants (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). During data analysis, I reviewed multiple data sources to identify emerging themes. (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Research Site

I conducted this study at a research institution in the Midwest. At the time of this study the university enrolled approximately 17,000 students and was comprised of seven degree granting colleges. Research for this study was conducted within the College of Visual and Performing Arts and recruited art majors enrolled in the art school. The art school offers two Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degrees with 11 areas of emphasis, a Bachelor of Science in Art Education (BSEd), a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Art History, and two general art degrees.

The institution’s advising structure follows a developmental model where students meet with their advisor to discuss academic progress, educational goals, and career planning. Advising within this college is also regarded as a shared responsibility. Students and advisors work collaboratively through each student’s academic journey.

Participants and Recruitment

I used purposive sampling to recruit individuals who best met the needs of the research design and who could provide information relevant to the research questions. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While any BFA major or BSED could choose to participate in virtual group advising, I collected data from only a sample of the population of participants.

The students’ major was especially important to the study because the researcher, who also conducted the advising sessions, needed to be knowledgeable about the curriculum and major requirements. For this study, any BFA or BSED major was eligible to participate based on
the cohort style framework of the major. The total number of majors in both programs was approximately 280 students. It is important to note that due to Covid-19 restrictions all students met virtually for advising, but participation in group advising, interviews, and the focus group was optional.

I notified students of the study via recruitment email and sent a scheduling link so interested participants could schedule their virtual group advising session. (see Appendix A). All group advising appointments were in one-hour increments. I followed up with interested participants by sending a confirmation email and an appointment reminder to ensure attendance and adequate sample size (see Table 1).

### Table 1

**Participant Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Area of Emphasis</th>
<th>Academic Standing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>BS. Ed</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>BS. Ed</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>BS. Ed</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>BS. Ed</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>BS. Ed</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>BS. Ed</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marce</td>
<td>BFA Studio Art</td>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>BFA Design/Media Arts</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jebi</td>
<td>BFA Design/Media Arts</td>
<td>Time Arts</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>BFA Design/Media Arts</td>
<td>Visual Communication</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>BFA Design/Media Arts</td>
<td>Visual Communication</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>BFA Design/Media Arts</td>
<td>Visual Communication</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

I conducted virtual group advising appointments four weeks prior to the enrollment period for Fall 2021. Due to Covid restrictions, all students met with their advisor virtually;
however, they had the option to meet individually or in a group. Students scheduled their appointments using an online scheduling platform and I sent a meeting link prior to their appointment.

After the virtual group appointment and prior to data collection, participants who opted to engage in either an individual interview or focus group signed a consent form (see Appendix B). The primary tool for data collection was semi-structured qualitative interviews with a target number of six to eight participants, which is consistent with data collection procedures for case studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study included an individual interview that focused on the students’ experiences during virtual group advising (see Appendix C). Upon data saturation, I reviewed transcripts and audio recordings to identify reoccurring themes that became evident during individual interviews.

Using the themes as a guide, I developed focus group questions to deepen understandings related to the themes (see Appendix D). Under the guidelines for conducting a full focus group, 6 to 10 participants engaged with peers and responded to others’ views (Litosseliti 2003). While facilitating the focus group, I asked questions to further prompt detailed descriptions of the participants’ virtual group advising experiences. The researcher encouraged participants to interact with others and to respond to diverse perspectives to ensure a meaningful focus group (Litosseliti, 2003).

**Data Analysis**

Identifying key words or phrases and grouping them into broader themes is one way to analyze data (Jones et al., 2013). Using Saldaña’s method of first and second cycle coding, I organized data into categories based on commonalities (Saldaña, 2013). Data were segmented
into categories and labeled with a preliminary code during the first cycle (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña). Similarities and differences among the preliminary codes were then examined to develop an overarching final code (Saldaña). Finally, three themes emerged from the data collected.

Criteria for Quality

Particular to case study design, trustworthiness is addressed by using thick rich descriptions to convey findings and increase the quality of research. These descriptions are comprehensive and precise explanations of the study (Jones et. al., 2013). These detailed descriptions provide multiple perspectives across the theme, making the results more apparent (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Gathering information from several students helped determine underlying themes related to the experiences and perceptions of students who participated in virtual group advising.

To ensure quality, I used member checking throughout this study and asked participants to determine if the descriptions and themes were accurate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I emailed emerging themes developed from individual interviews and the focus group to the participants. The participants closely reviewed the themes and commented on my interpretations of their experiences.

Findings

Three overarching themes emerged from data analysis. These were a) participants’ increased feelings of academic preparedness, b) increased social interactions among peers during
and after advising, and c) participants’ positive perceptions of technology in advising. The following findings will be discussed below in further detail.

**Increased Academic Preparedness**

The participants who noted that virtual group advising helped them with feelings of increased preparedness shared they felt better prepared in two primary ways: a) academic preparedness as it related to scheduling of classes for the upcoming semester and b) programmatic preparedness linked to major specific milestones and requirements. The participants who felt more academically prepared engaged in behaviors like putting classes into their shopping cart during their advising session. This act differs greatly from most traditional individual advising sessions in which students leave the advising office with handwritten notes listing courses they should enroll in. The brevity of in-person advising often does not allow time for students to look at individual classes to ensure there are no time conflicts or closed classes. Contrarily, students who participated in group advising found more time to search for classes, organize their schedules, and ask questions. Marce enjoyed being able to “get things done as we were going” while she was in the group advising session. Many discussed the benefits of choosing classes with an advisor present and being prepared for enrollment as opposed to leaving the advising session with a worksheet and having to search for classes on their own. When asked about setting up enrollment shopping carts during advising, Ryan stated,

> I definitely find that it’s helpful because it just, it takes the worry away, and then it catches the problems that you might see. It’s like, oh I can’t take this class because it’s at the same time as this class.

Kate agreed that setting up her enrollment shopping cart was helpful because “something wasn’t available at the time I wanted so I was able to go back and ask questions during the meeting.”
When conflicts arose such as closed classes or time conflicts, Ryan and some of his peers were able to problem solve with their advisor during the advising session rather than having to reach out for a follow-up appointment to find alternate classes. Louise concluded,

I feel at peace with my schedule going forward. I got an idea, I guess, of what I would be taking and like what times things were available and how my schedule would be working for next semester. And it’s especially important to me because I have a job here in [names town].

Working to set up shopping carts during a group session allowed students time to create their schedule but also listen to conversations about how to problem solve scheduling conflicts.

In addition to feelings of academic preparedness, students also felt more prepared for upcoming programmatic milestones, such as the admission portfolio review, which Kate and other participants discussed during their group advising session. They shared their experiences related to the submission process and gave advice to others who were preparing to submit as well. Ryan found it beneficial that groups consisted of like majors and that he was able to hear about future program requirements. He offered,

I remember listening to the other students talking about, like the upper classes that they were taking. Like the ones involving, you know, the final steps to their graduation stuff. So, I just remember like listening to them and not really interacting, but at least listening to what they were saying to kind of like have an idea of what my future holds. I kind of liked knowing what happens later on down the road. I think it also allowed me to understand like where I’m at in the whole chain of uh, like the process and I know who’s with me.

Ryan, like many of his peers, was able to listen to the experiences of upper classmen who had been through portfolio review before him. They offered advice and gave helpful hints to yield favorable results.

Sam, who was moving into her last semester before graduation, wished she had the opportunity to participate in group advising in her earlier years. Sam said,

I thought it was really helpful too because I was thinking about if I was in the place of
one of the other students who was not quite as far in the program as I am. I think that if I had been in group advising, you know, earlier semesters than now, it would have been really helpful to hear from those older, or you know, students that are more in the advanced courses to get their input. So, I actually thought that it was overall, I actually really enjoyed it.

Although Sam was a senior, who provided students with a lot of good advice, she also considered the perspectives of students who were not as far along in the program. She acknowledged the benefits of general peer advising when compared to individual advising, noting that students felt more academically prepared after participating in virtual group advising. Students had immediate access to their advisor to answer curricular questions as well as support from their peers when choosing classes and solving scheduling conflicts. Additionally, students found it helpful to engage with peers at multiple levels to discuss criteria for admission, programmatic milestones, and tips on being a successful student.

**Increased Social Interaction among Peers**

The second prevalent theme was increased social interaction among peers due to their group advising session. The participants reported an increase in social interactions pertaining to academics during advising and outside of the session as well. These peer-to-peer interactions created feelings of connectedness. Jessica and Sam referred to it as a “sense of community.” As Anna described her conversation with another student, she acknowledged she was happy to share her experiences. She considered that students in the same program with the same requirements might also encounter the same struggles. She said, “You form a bond that way when you have something similar and you’re dealing with the same issues.” For Anna, the bond she was able to form around struggles that both she and her peers experienced was helpful.
Louise felt one of the biggest benefits to virtual group advising was the ability to communicate with other students. Louise offered,

I think getting feedback from other students on certain classes that they’re going to be taking or getting advice on what classes to take is definitely a very big plus to group advising that you can’t get from individual appointments because even though your advisor has most likely been through college and this and that, they might not have taken those specific courses or might not have even been at the same school. So, I think it’s nice to get firsthand opinions on things that you’re going to be taking.

She later added,

We were getting advice from other students who had already taken certain courses. So, that was definitely helpful, like getting suggestions on what science courses to take. And for the people who were taking, what was it, like, the portfolio review, or whatever. I don’t remember what it’s called, but like getting student’s feedback on that kind of stuff. So, that was definitely an interesting aspect that I don’t think would come out of an individual session.

Louise valued the advice she received from peers. She recognized that while the advisor may be the professional, the student perspective was valuable. Being current students, they have firsthand knowledge of course expectations and can provide beneficial feedback.

Some of the benefits participants identified were feelings of community and connectedness in the group advising setting. Some even connected after the session ended. Olivia shared that she was able to connect with peers well after the advising session ended when she said,

Like this semester since I knew some people, they were able to ask me questions on the side, like, Oh, hey, did you mean this or are you taking this? So, like, that was also helpful now that I know people. So, in a way it was like helping out each other.

Similarly, Ryan described a situation between him and another student who was currently in the same class. Ryan and the other student spent time during their current class discussing advising and what courses they would be taking after the group advising session occurred. He stated,
I think another benefit might be being able to interact with other students outside or during advising. Knowing other people that are in the same path as you is very helpful and beneficial because then you guys, then you get to meet up, you know, outside of the advising, and you know maybe ask a question. It’s like, oh hey, when you took this class, how did you feel about it or like, you know, what should I do instead of this? You know, kind of like a peer advising or peer on peer advising.

Connections made during virtual group advising extended beyond the scheduled appointment time. The students interacted with their peers on a more personal level and began finding commonalities that built relationships. The interactions students had with each other during group advising broke communication barriers and encouraged a sense of community.

Increased Positive Perceptions of Technology in Advising

The third finding identified in this study related to the use of technology. In this study, the participants’ perceptions of using technology in advising was increasingly positive. They were asked about their initial feelings regarding virtual group advising before they engaged in a session. Many reported they thought it was an interesting concept but did have a variety of questions and reservations surrounding participation, confidentiality, and the general procedure within a virtual platform. Sam even admitted, “Honestly, I thought it was going to be lame.” When the participants were asked about how they felt after virtual group advising, all 12 stated they enjoyed it. Although some indicated they still might prefer individual advising, all indicated they would be willing to attend a virtual group advising session in the future.

The participants also identified some benefits of using technology in advising that attributed to their overall positive experience. One benefit was the level of convenience technology offered. Ryan enjoyed being able to stay in his dorm room for advising. He shared, “I think it allows us to do it kind of at our own time, so there’s a little more freedom.” Similarly,
Edith shared that she appreciated the convenience. She offered a commuter’s sentiment and how she appreciated not having to drive to meet in her advisor’s office. She offered,

> They [students] don’t have to drive out to the, like, building where their advisor is, like, they can just stay where they’re at, you know, and it saves up more time. I always think of how it saves on gas money. So that’s the, I guess that’s the advantage, I would say.”

Anna agreed that those who do not live on campus will likely find it easier to connect with their advisor. “Some people don’t live on campus and I, I’m sure that not many people want to drive over and do an in-person meeting, so it will be easier for them to do online.”

Aside from convenience, Marce indicated an interesting point about flexibility in using technology. She shared how some students could be more comfortable behind a screen than in a face-to-face setting. Louise shared,

> It takes some of that like, edge off of being in person with people you don’t know, and like some of the nerves that come with that, and anxiety. So, being in a situation where you don’t have to show your face or you don’t even have to speak because some people just type in the chat, you know? I think it’s easier to talk to people through a screen.

Olivia added that she enjoyed having the chat feature available to ask questions. Ryan agreed when he offered,

> If you really wanted to, you could be like, oh, here’s this resource. I want you to look at this, boom, send the link in the chat or then maybe share your screen. I think it could just be easier to communicate certain processes.

Sam responded that she felt the screenshare was also helpful: “Being able to see the advisor’s screen while navigating the enrollment system or other websites was nice.” During the advising session, students were found to be engaging in conversations with each other while the advisor could be focused on answering another student’s question. This offered flexibility in social interactions among students without interrupting what the advisor might be saying. Using the chat also allowed the students to return to the conversation to see what was being said.
As previously mentioned, the ability for students to set up their enrollment shopping carts during the advising session led to academic preparedness. This would not have been possible in the group setting without technology readily available for all students. Incorporating technology supported students in a variety of ways and enhanced the advising session. When asked about barriers to using technology in advising, the participants listed the possibility of students not having access to internet, a laptop or computer, and/or a quiet space to meet as some of the potential challenges. However, none of the participants in the study faced any of those hardships. Kate shared, “I don’t feel like I lost anything from using technology instead of meeting in person.” The ability to meet with an academic advisor virtually provides a level of convenience and flexibility not achievable through other advising methods. Whether on or off campus, students can connect with their advisor from a comfortable location. Virtual advising gives students the flexibility of using video, audio, and chat features to interact with others. Finally, the ability to screenshare provided visual examples and could be used for demonstrations.

Discussion

This study was framed by Kearsley and Shneiderman’s (1998) theory of engagement, which holds that when students learn using technology-based platforms, they should be provided with meaningful tasks and activities. This model is built on the theory’s three pillars: relate, create, and donate. These pillars are understood to increase motivation and provide opportunities to apply problem solving and engage in shared learning.

I explored the students’ perceptions of virtual group advising and found an increase in students feeling academically prepared. Consistent with engagement theory’s focus on creating and decision making, the students were actively involved in an authentic effort in which they
could problem solve and generate solutions (Astin, 1999; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). The task at hand was important to the students as they worked to build a schedule of classes for the upcoming semester. The students negotiated classes and time conflicts to create an ideal schedule, resulting in feelings of preparedness for the upcoming semester.

Associated with the components of relate and donate, the students also cited increased social interaction among peers and were observed communicating and collaborating during the virtual group advising session. More significantly, student connections were continued beyond the session and infiltrated classrooms as the academic conversations continued. Previous research supports interpersonal connections and collaboration as they lead to increased learning, motivation to learn, and fulfillment (Astin, 1999; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). During and after virtual group advising, the students reported a sense of community as they shared relevant information and advice and gave suggestions to peers regarding classes and upcoming academic milestones.

Integral to this particular theoretical framework is the use of technology in learning-based environments. Therefore, this study additionally investigated students’ experiences using technology during group advising. The findings supported their positive perceptions of using technology and can be directly attributed to the three main components of engagement theory: create, relate, and donate. The students’ feedback and shared experiences provided detailed descriptions of how technology provided a unique setting in which the students could engage, interact, and collaborate.
Implications and Recommendations for Practice

This study provided an overview of the students’ experiences related to virtual group advising. The overarching themes identified in this study support the benefits of implementing virtual group advising as a supplemental advising strategy. The findings are supported by the participants’ feedback and focus group conversations surrounding academic preparedness, increased social interactions among peers, and the use of technology in advising.

This study carries important implications for academic advisors. First, it is crucial for advisors to break away from traditional normative advising practices to better meet the needs of students. Second, it is imperative to explore alternative methods of advising that allow students to engage with others, share their educational journeys, and provide opportunities in which students can learn from and encourage one another. Third, when working with students, it is essential to be forward thinking about the uses of technology as the demands for such platforms increase. Rather than focusing on how to meet students’ needs individually, advisors should also consider the interpersonal and transactional needs of students and incorporate them into advising opportunities.

After implementing numerous virtual group advising sessions, several recommendations emerged. The key recommendations for those who wish to implement virtual group advising are a) consider confidentiality, b) anticipate issues with technology, c) use strategic scheduling, and d) effectively facilitate discussion. Using these recommendations as a guide will further inform students who are new to the process and prepare advisors to conduct a more beneficial virtual group advising session.
Consider Confidentiality

Prior to beginning the advising session, it is important to address confidentiality. Given students are in a group setting, shared information will not be confidential. Therefore, advisors should avoid discussing current class concerns or issues. Students should be invited to request an individual appointment to discuss any challenges they are currently experiencing. To ensure confidentiality, nothing should be discussed pertaining to students’ grades, cumulative grade point average (GPA), or other information related to academic standing during group advising. By participating in virtual group advising, students are only consenting to openly disclose major, area of emphasis, and discussion surrounding choice of classes and enrollment for the upcoming semester.

Anticipate Issues with Technology

Students may struggle with technology for a variety of reasons, and while advisors are not often skilled at navigating these types of issues, they should be prepared to troubleshoot a few common challenges. The advisor conducting the appointment should be familiar with the virtual platform’s settings and be able to assist students with basic audio, video, or screenshare options. In many cases, a back-up plan is important. There are several reasons students may opt to forego using video and/or audio and should not be required to do so. Students struggling with audio but desire to use it may use the chat or take advantage of the call-in feature most virtual platforms offer. This allows students to use a phone to communicate in place of their computer microphone. Advisors should have follow-up appointment openings readily available for students to schedule should they become disconnected.
Use Strategic Scheduling

Advisors should be mindful about how they create advising groups. To best connect students and provide them with a level of comfort, like majors should be grouped together, but include students from all academic levels. Having diverse groups allows juniors and seniors to give advice and provide guidance to younger students and builds community among peers.

Group size seems to have an impact on social interactions and should be a consideration when scheduling. Students who were in groups of four to six seemed to have a more authentic experience with sufficient time to ask questions, search for classes, and build schedules. Larger groups of 8 to 10 can be intimidating for some students and impede conversation during advising. Furthermore, it becomes more difficult to stay within the ideal one-hour time frame with an increased number of students.

Effectively Facilitate Discussion

Facilitating discussion might be the most important role for the advisor, as it encourages communication and peer interaction. Asking students to share their experiences or explain a process is quite effective in soliciting a student’s response. Additionally, students tend to engage when invited to share their opinion. It is also important to monitor discussion. For example, when students are making suggestions about classes or instructors, advisors should discourage students from using the words good, bad, easy, and hard. It is more helpful to guide students’ discussion in a way that focuses on course content, what they enjoyed about the class, what might have been challenging, or tips on how to be successful in the course.
It is important to note, this study does not imply that virtual group advising is an adequate replacement for individual advising. In fact, the participants in this study provided positive feedback about one-on-one advising and noted that it provides a sense of personal connection strictly with the advisor and affords the student undivided personalized attention that is hard to obtain in a group setting. However, to provide equitable advising experiences for students, advisors should strongly consider virtual group advising as an alternative practice that encourages interaction and engagement for students both on and off campus.

Conclusion

Academic advising is an essential support service offered to students. With a focus on developmental advising strategies, students and advisors work together to create an ongoing plan for success. When advising is offered in a group setting, it creates an environment in which students can actively collaborate and interact with peers. Furthermore, the ability to add technology to the group setting through virtual platforms increases accessibility for students to regularly participate in advising.

I have shared key points supported by the research and the participants’ feedback of how virtual group advising benefits students. When this strategy is infused with current advising practices, it not only transforms traditional advising but augments the advising experience for students. Virtual group advising reinforces the importance of academic advising and creates a more equitable and inclusive support service in which students can interact and engage with their peers.
CHAPTER 3
SCHOLARLY REFLECTION

Initially, this dissertation began with an entirely different focus. As an academic advisor and due to my large caseload of students, which is well over the recommended NACADA limit of 296, I was motivated to investigate ways advisors could meet with many students more quickly. As I began to research this new area, I found that group advising has advantages in meeting with students quickly and implementing technology in advising also allows students flexibility to meet with their advisor. I quickly became less interested in managing my 400+ students and began to focus on a new strategy in advising. There is previous research on virtual group advising and its implementation as well as group advising and recommendations for practice; however, nothing discussed the integration of both ideas and students’ perceptions of this new strategy.

With a focus on the student experience, my research evolved into investigating social interactions and student engagement in the group dynamic as well as how the students perceived the use of technology during advising. There is no argument that academic advisors are influential in student success; however, professional practice in advising must be assessed and adjusted to meet the changing needs of students.

The goal of this study was to understand the experiences of students who participated in virtual group advising. While academic advisors must engage in transformative practices, it is equally important to evaluate the student experience. Given my student-centered nature, I felt it
was important to understand how virtual group advising impacted the students and listen to the feedback they could provide regarding its benefits and how to improve the experience.

Unforeseen Challenges

I initially sought to recruit participants to engage in a one-hour interview that focused on previous advising experiences. Whether high school or higher education, I wanted to reflect on perspectives related to individual advising. After the first interview, the participants would have scheduled a virtual group advising session and, finally, committed to a second one-hour interview in which questions would allow the students to reflect on their virtual group advising session.

There were two major factors that contributed to changes to the initial proposal. First, Covid abruptly impacted the traditional advising structure and forced a quick transition into the virtual world. As a result, students could no longer choose to attend advising virtually; instead, it was the only option. Therefore, virtual advising was implemented in April 2020 as a pilot and again in October 2020 when data were collected. During both of those times, participating in a group session was still optional.

The IRB process also impacted the structure of data collection. Due to technology issues within the institutional platform, approval was delayed. I had to forego the first interview and move forward in my normal advising responsibilities. I conducted virtual group advising sessions for about three weeks before my study was approved, allowing me to collect data. Upon approval, I quickly recruited students to participate in interviews that now included questions combined from both interview protocols. Data collected from the individual interviews guided
questions asked during a focus group. This allowed me to gather more in-depth information on reoccurring topics.

Preparing for Virtual Group Advising

In creating the scheduling links for advising, I was intentional about grouping like majors together. I initially thought of this through an advising lens that would make course selection easier and more standard. Most students from sophomore to senior level follow a cohort model and would generally have the same two or three major requirements. In addition to their pre-determined major requirements, students would only need to add general electives or general education classes to build their fall schedule. What I did not realize at the time, was the impact this choice had on how students interacted with each other. Some majors already knew each other or at least shared a class together. I believe this familiarity played a role in the level of comfort students had about sharing thoughts and ideas as well as asking questions. Having the same requirements also aided in conversations about the admission portfolio process, which tends to be a stressful milestone for many students. Younger students were able to benefit from the knowledge of others and gained helpful tips and insights on how to prepare, submit, and pass portfolio review for their major area.

I was also intentional about only including BFA and BS. ED majors. These majors progress in cohorts, unlike general BA and BS majors. The more general art majors require in-depth conversations about their goals after graduation and intended career paths. Advising this group of students is often more time consuming since each student’s plan can be very individualized.
Going into this idea of virtual group advising, I assumed there would be concerns about privacy and technology and I wanted to address them early on. Prior to advising, I began the session informing students that I would not be answering questions or discussing concerns about current classes, but there would be opportunities for follow-up appointments. In anticipation of issues with technology, I wanted students to know that if they were disconnected, they should email me to reschedule. I left several time slots open on my calendar to meet with students needing individual follow up. During the advising session, I was careful to respect the students’ confidentiality and not violate FERPA laws.

Assessing the Process

Overall, virtual group advising was a success. There are still students who prefer the individualized attention they get from in-person advising; however, they were not opposed to virtual group advising. The students enjoyed the interaction they had with their peers during the session, and I wonder how much of that was due to Covid. We have endured over a year of virtual learning with limited interaction and many students have been craving more opportunities to be social. I think virtual group advising provided the students with that outlet at a prime time. Therefore, it is likely that Covid-19 restrictions and social distancing increased the perceived positive impact surrounding communication and the group dynamic.

I expected to navigate issues with technology but did not encounter anything significant. Students were able to connect, stay connected, and communicate. This may have been due, in part, to already having transitioned to virtual platforms for learning. I will also add that most art majors have access to laptops since it is required for many classes. Therefore, access to technology was not an issue. I did notice that some students used the virtual chat feature rather
than their microphones, but I feel that was based on preference. There was no conversation indicating sound issues.

Based on feedback, the size of the advising group, at times, was a factor in student satisfaction. Each advising group ranged from 3-10 students. The smaller groups seemed to flow a bit better, whereas students in the larger groups had more wait time before they could ask questions or get help from me. In the future, I would consider creating groups with no more than five or six students. I think this would allow students more time to talk and ask questions and preserve the more individualized experience many were missing.

Another change I might consider is not including first-year students in the group setting. I learned that first-year students have not yet personally connected with their advisor in a one-on-one setting and that might impact their level of engagement within the group. Research surrounding the student-advisor relationship solidifies the importance of making connections, and this study has shown me that students who do not have a personal connection with their advisor may not participate as much or feel a sense of belonging in the group session. Therefore, it might make more sense to target continuing students at the sophomore through senior levels.

A suggestion was made by one of the participants to focus on the cohort by class and major. This idea would ensure that all students in a particular class would be advised at the same time. It would make scheduling extremely difficult – in fact, nearly impossible, but it led to a conversation about having the advisor come to the classroom. We laughed and named it “mobile advising.” There are many challenges that would need to be addressed with this type of model, but it was a fun side thought to think of the advisor coming to class for an advising presentation.

A final consideration for change relates to privacy. An issue was brought up during the individual interviews was a participant commented that during her group session, a peer was
recommended to take a class they were previously in together. This indicated to the participant that her peer had either failed or withdrawn from the course and had to retake it. This type of scenario might be rare but can be an invasion of privacy. While there is not a work around for this situation in a group setting, it might be wise to inform students of the possibility this could happen. Students who have concerns might want to schedule an individual appointment rather than a group appointment.

Application to Practice

I am excited by the outcomes of this research project and am motivated to continue using it in my own advising practice. While it is not a replacement for traditional advising, it does offer flexibility for students and an alternative for those who enjoy the peer interaction. All the students who participated in interviews and the focus group indicated they would participate in virtual group advising in the future, so I would certainly keep it as an option. I have data on the number of students who scheduled each day and would use that to determine which days and times would be best for students who wanted to schedule virtual group advising in future semesters. Our school does not offer classes on Friday and that might end up being a preferred time for many students to attend.

Among my colleagues, I have not received favorable feedback, and, at times, the negativity has been overwhelming. Despite the stones that have been thrown, I hope to present my research and encourage advisors across campus to try it. I would love for them to observe a live or recorded session to see the impact it has on students. While I understand, it may not be feasible for everyone, I am confident that other students and advisors across campus would find
virtual group advising advantageous. On a larger scale, I might consider presenting this at a NACADA conference.

Application to Research

Writing the journal article was by far the most stressful process. The writing, re-writing, and editing was taxing. I think the limited time frame I was working under contributed to the fatigue I experienced and assume this would not be the case in my future publications. I also think that given the journal article was part of our program requirements, the process was scaffolded in a unique way. In another research project I am working on, the order in which we are working differs from how the program is structured. For example, we have done data collection and will be writing findings soon but have not started the literature review. In conducting future research, it seems I will have more flexibility in process and timelines that will allow me to develop my own research mechanisms.

One of the biggest things I have learned in writing my own qualitative research is how careful one must be in reporting data. I would frequently have to ask myself: “Why are you doing this, what is the purpose, and does this answer the question?” Staying in alignment with the purpose is so important and can be difficult at times because it is easy to fall into research rabbit holes. There were times during research that I learned something new or became wrapped up in something interesting that I had to go back to my original research questions to refocus myself.

I have also become more aware of how to be a critical reader. With qualitative research being based on researcher interpretation, it is important to assess trustworthiness. Results are never going to be 100% positive. Articles should be open to share its flaws, challenges, and
opposing perspectives. This gives readers reliable information and room to assess how the research may impact their own practice.

Having not published yet, this will be new territory for me to cover. There are many unknowns and I feel as though I have several questions. I feel this is my biggest opportunity for growth. I need to engage in reading more articles from professional journals to better understand the structure and the wording. I saw this reflected in my Chapter 2 edits. My writing was not terrible; however, the information I had seemed to be in the wrong order or under the wrong headings. I am confident clarity will come over time as I continue to read and publish.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT EMAIL
Dear Student,

My name is Bethany Geiseman and I am conducting research on students’ experiences related to virtual group advising. Therefore, I am looking for participants who are current undergraduate art majors in BFA programs or Art Education majors.

Participants interested in volunteering for this study will be asked to attend a 1-hour virtual group advising session in March. You will also be asked to choose to participate in 2 1-hour individual interviews or a 1-hour focus group. The first interview will be held in early March and ask questions about your previous advising experiences. The second interview and focus group will be scheduled after your participation in the virtual group advising session, late March through April, and ask questions pertaining to your virtual group advising session. Both interviews and the focus group will be audio recorded.

You will not be directly compensated for your participation. However, participants will have the opportunity to share their story and provide valuable information that could improve current advising practice at their institution and across the field of Higher Education.

Participation is voluntary and you will not be penalized if you choose to opt out at any time.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions about this study.

Bethany Geiseman

Graduate Student
Northern Illinois University
Higher Education and Student Affairs
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
Virtual Group Advising: Students Perceptions through a Social Constructivist Lens

Investigators

Name: Bethany Geiseman  Dept: CAHE  Phone: 

Key Information

- This is a voluntary research study on students’ experiences related to virtual group advising.

- This 3-month long study asks participants to attend a virtual group advising session in March or April 2020. Participants will be invited to participate in two 1-hour individual interviews and/or a 1-hour focus group. The first interview will ask questions about students’ current advising experience. The second interview and focus group will ask questions about students’ virtual group advising experience.
  o Focus group and interview questions are centered around the students’ experiences related to group advising and using a virtual platform. It will not address anything directly related to students’ perceptions of the advisor.

- The benefits of this study are that it will deepen our understanding of students' perceptions of virtual group advising and its potential use as an alternate advising method. Findings will provide insights on how virtual group advising impacts developmental advising. It will also address what students perceive as advantages and barriers to using a virtual advising method. The information will also help advisors adjust current advising practice to better meet the diverse needs of students.

- There are no foreseeable risks. However, it is important to note that the advisor conducting the advising sessions, administering interviews, and facilitating the focus group is also the participants major advisor.
  o As a participant of this study, you have the right to opt out or withdraw at any time during the study without questions or consequence.

Eligibility

You are eligible for this study, if:

- you are an undergraduate art student AND your major is in a Bachelor of Fine Arts area (BFA) or Art Education.

Description of the Study

The purpose of the study is to understand student's experiences related to virtual group advising. It will focus on impacts of group advising and the use of technology in an advising session. This study is important because it investigates alternative advising methods to better support students in a developmental learning environment while removing barriers for those who cannot meet with their advisor in person.
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to attend a 1-hour virtual group advising session in March or April. You will also choose to participate in either 2 1-hour interviews or a 1-hour focus group. During the first interview, in early March, you will be asked questions about your previous advising experiences. The second interview and focus groups will be scheduled in late-March through April after your participation in virtual group advising. Questions asked during the second interview and focus group will be related to your virtual group advising experience.

Risks and Benefits

There are no foreseeable risks. However, it is important to note that the advisor conducting the advising sessions, administering interviews, and facilitating the focus group is also the participants major advisor. Focus group and interview questions will focus solely on students’ experiences related to advising in a group setting and the use of technology during advising. No question at any time will ask about students’ perception of their advisor. Any participant that experiences discomfort at any time during the study can withdraw without question or consequence.

A benefit of this study is that participants will have the opportunity to share their story and provide valuable information that could improve current advising practice at their institution and across the field of Higher Education.

Confidentiality

- This study is confidential.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file.
- All audio recordings will be recorded using Teams or Zoom and uploaded to a password protected folder. Only the researcher will have access to the confidential information and all recordings will be destroyed three years after the completion of the research project.
- All recordings will be transcribed. Transcriptions will use pseudonyms and be stored in a password protected file on a laptop. Transcripts will be destroyed three years after the completion of the research project.
- Your identity will remain confidential. You will be asked to select a pseudonym. You will only be referred by pseudonym in any reports or publishable information.
- I will not include any information in any report I publish that would make it possible to identify you.
- All information collected will only be used for this purpose of this study. All information will be destroyed three years after the completion of this research project.
- When participating in a focus group, confidentiality among the members of the group cannot be guaranteed.
Your Rights

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right to skip any question or research activity, as well as to withdraw completely from participation at any point during the process.

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, during, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact the researcher, Bethany Geiseman at bgeiseman@niu.edu or Associate Professor, Dr. Katy Jaekel at kjaekel@niu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators or if you have any problems or concerns that occur because of your participation, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety at (815)753-8588.

Future Use of the Research Data

Your information collected as a part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research, even if all identifiers are removed.

________________________________________________________________________

Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

________________________________________________________________________  _________________
Participant’s Signature Date

I give my consent to be audio recorded during any interviews or focus groups I participate in during this study.

________________________________________________________________________  _________________
Participant’s Signature Date
Part I:

1. Review informed consent.
2. Ask participants if there are any questions.
3. Ask participant what pseudonym that would like to use in reports and publications.

Part 2: Open-ended questions regarding previous advising experiences

1. Please describe for me any previous advising experiences you have had prior to virtual group advising.
   a. How was the appointment scheduled?
   b. What were some reasons you met with the advisor?
   c. How would you describe your role during the appointment?
   d. What did you perceive as your advisor’s role?
   e. Can you describe how thoughts, ideas, solutions were generated during the appointment?
   f. How did you feel when leaving the appointment?
2. What, if anything would improve the individual advising experience?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to share about individual advising?

Part 3: Open-ended question regarding the virtual group advising experience.

1. Can you please describe your overall, group advising experience?
   a. What would you say your role was during virtual group advising?
      i. How does this compare to your individual advising experience?
   b. Did you have any interaction with others during your group session?
   c. What did you perceive as the advisor’s role during virtual group advising?
2. What, if any, are some benefits of group advising?
3. What, if any, do you see as challenges or barriers to virtual group advising?

Part 4: Open-ended questions regarding the use of technology during group advising.

1. What, if any, are some concerns you had about using technology during group advising?
2. What, if any, are some challenges you experienced with technology during group advising?
3. What if any, do you see as benefits to implementing technology during group advising?

Part 5: Wrap up questions.

1. If given the option, would you participate in virtual group advising again? Why or why not?
2. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your virtual advising experience?
Part I:
3. Review informed consent.
4. Ask participants if there are any questions.
5. Ask participant what pseudonym that would like to use in reports and publications.

Part 2: Perceptions of virtual group advising.
1. What words come to mind when thinking about virtual group advising?
2. What were some positive experiences?
3. What challenges were encountered?

Part 3: Perceptions of student interaction
1. What interactions did you have with other participants during virtual group advising?
2. How did these interactions make you feel?
3. How did these interactions impact your feelings about the upcoming semester?

Part 4: Using technology

- What are your thoughts on implementing technology into advising?
  - Describe any challenges you had using technology in advising?
  - What do you see as benefits to using technology in advising?
- How might the use of technology in advising enhance the advising experience?
- What changes would you suggest that might improve the use of technology in advising?

Part 5: Wrap-up questions.
1. What suggestions do you have that might enhance the virtual group advising experience for students?
2. Is there anything else you would like to share about virtual group advising?