CHECKPOINT 2

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CAPSTONE

FRANKLIN GPT
USER RESEARCH

GABI RIVERA
EMILY CARTER
MADELINE SMITH
CAROLINE PITFIELD
SAMHITA NARISETTY

Franklin College of
Arts and Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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Research Objectives

The goal of this research is to understand what makes an advising appointments effective from both student and advisor perspectives. It aims to compare how students and advisors define a successful advising session while exploring how interruptions, multitasking, and time constraints influence the quality of these meetings.

The study also examines how advisors manage multiple systems and communication tools during appointments. By identifying these challenges, the research seeks to uncover opportunities to improve focus, clarity, and overall efficiency in advising interactions.

Target Audience

The primary target audience for this research is Franklin College Academic Advisors, including a small sample of approximately five advisors, including our main point of contact, Angela Bowlus and Mike Merva. Secondary audience includes current University of Georgia students from any major or academic year.

Gathering insights from both advisors and students ensures that the research reflects experiences from both sides of the advising process and captures a more complete picture of current advising practices.

Research Methods

Students - Surveys

Student data will be gathered through an online survey created using Google Forms and distributed through Slack channels and personal networks. Survey questions will focus on the types of topics student discuss with their advisors, whether they leave appointments feel confused, how clearly advisors explain requirements, program details, and whether students perceive their advisors as multitasking. The survey will also ask students whether

Advisors - Interviews

Data from advisors will be collected through one-on-one interviews focused on understanding their advising workflows and challenges. Interview questions will explore what a typical advising appointment looks like, how often advisors switch between systems during meetings, what information is hardest to access quickly, whether appointment times feel sufficient, and which parts of the process feels inefficient or repetitive. These interviews will provide qualitative insights into how advisors manage multitasking, technology, and time pressures during advising appointments.

Survey Format

Respondents

The survey received 25 responses. All respondents were anonymous to maintain accuracy.

Structure

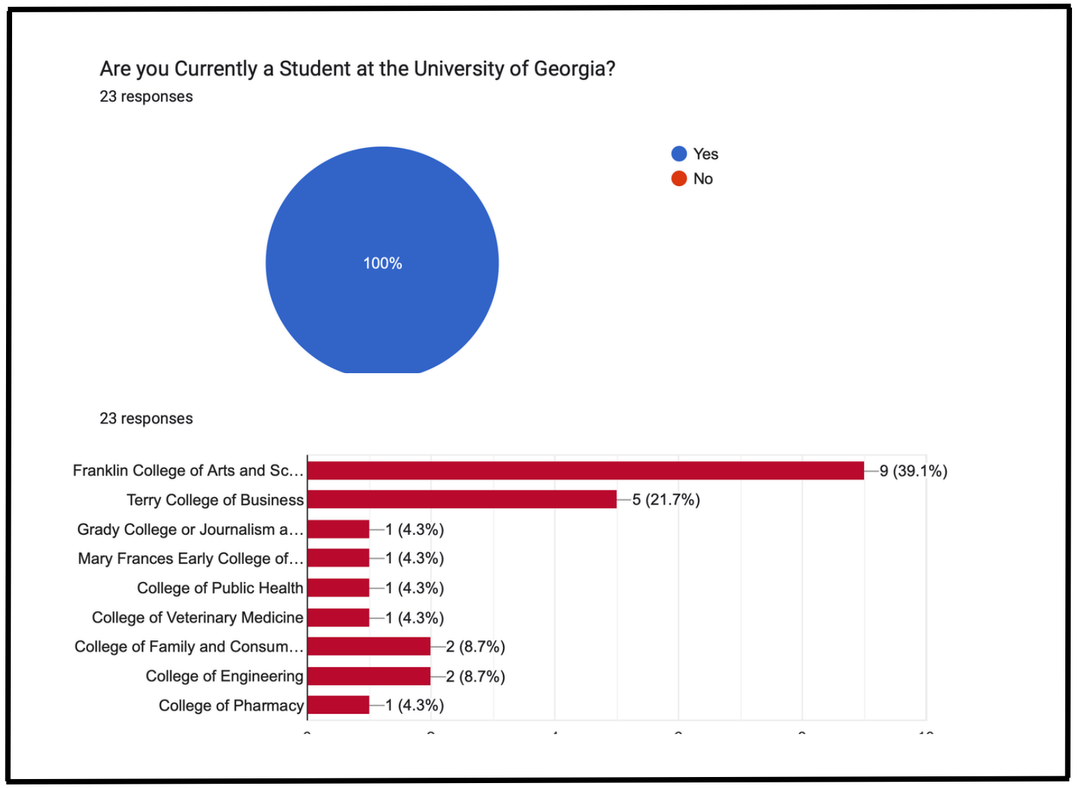
The survey contains seven sections. The first two sections gather basic information about whether the respondent is a UGA student and what college they are in. The third section focuses on the topics discussed during advising using a checklist. The fourth and fifth section use rating-scale questions from poor to excellent. The final two sections are open-response questions where students can provide more detailed comments.

Questions

The survey was structured around these major learning outcomes informed by the client's expectations for the implementation of this project.

1. What kind of topics do you usually discussion with your advisor?
2. How would you rate your advisor's assistance during enrolling in classes?
3. How would you rate your advisor's communication, clarity of explanations, and ability to stay focused during appointments?
4. If you could change one thing about the advising process, what would it be?
5. What is one thing your advisor does well?

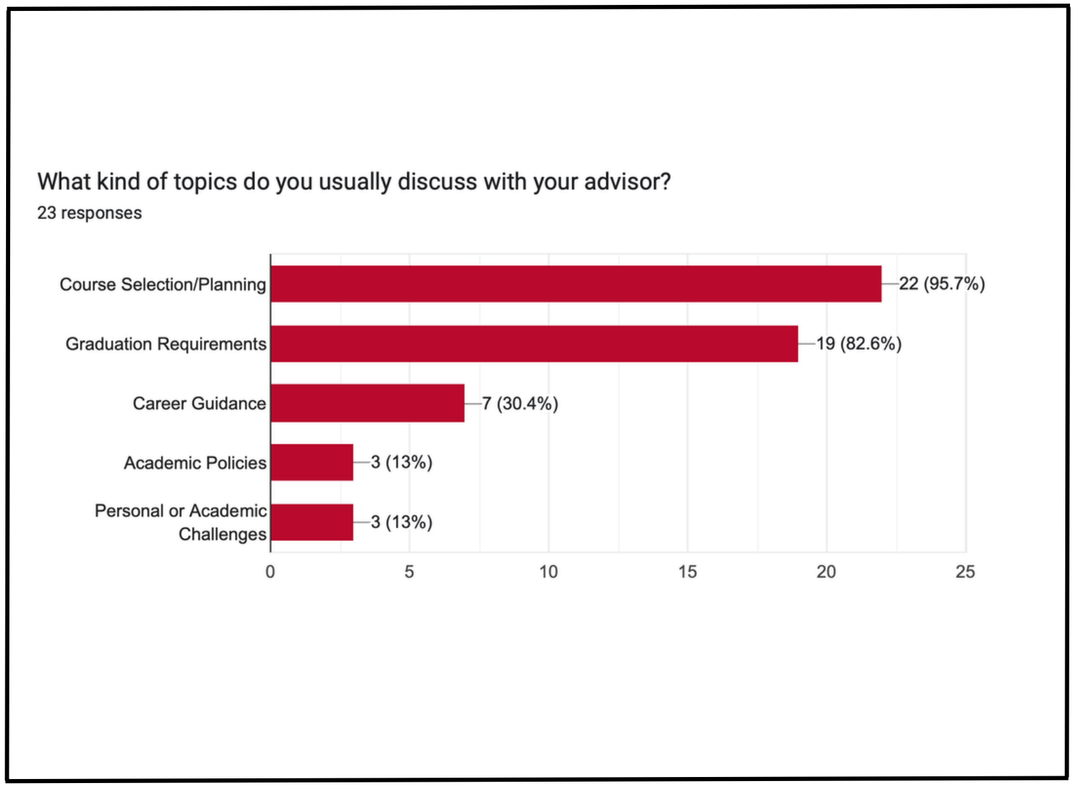
Key Findings - Survey



General Information

The first section of the survey, we collected background information to determine whether the respondents were current UGA students and to identify which college within the university they belong to. This information helped ensure that responses represented students from a variety of academic colleges across the university.

Key Findings - Survey



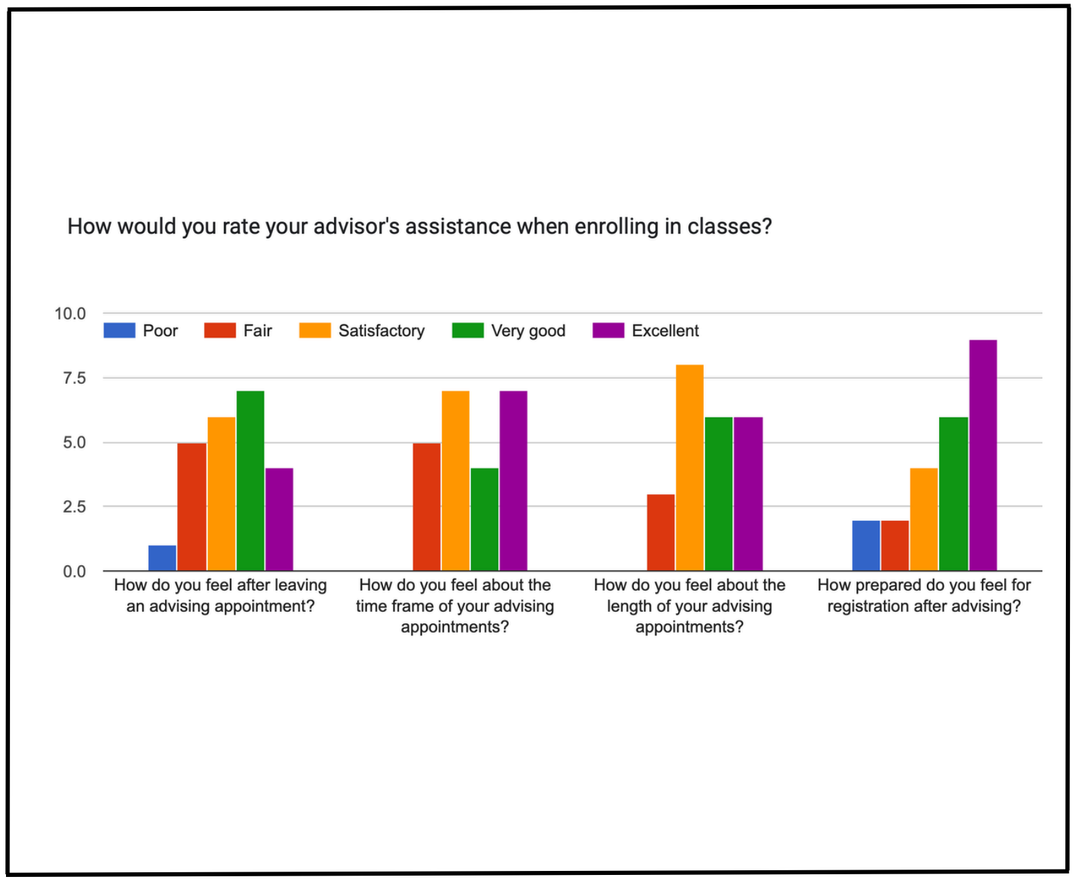
Topics Discussed

Respondents were asked to select the areas more relevant to their experiences, such as course planning, degree requirements, registration questions, and long-term academic goals. Collecting this information helped clarify the primary purposes of advising meetings and highlighted patters in student needs.

Key Findings - Survey

Ratings of Advising Effectiveness Preparedness for Registration

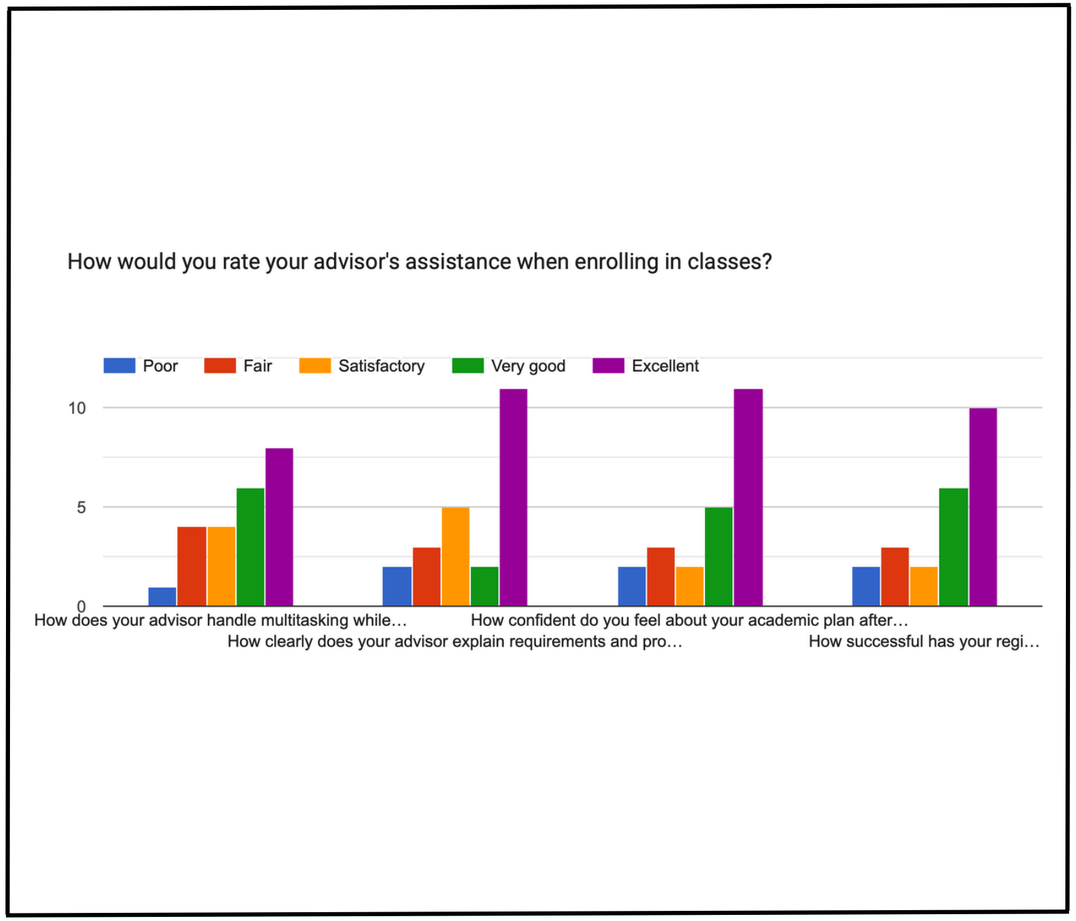
This section of the survey asked students to rate their advising experience using a scale ranging from Poor to Excellent. Questions focused on how helpful their advisor was during class registration, how students felt after leaving an advising appointment, and whether the time frame and length of the appointment felt appropriate. Students were also asked to evaluate how prepared they felt for registration after meeting with their advisor. These rating-scale questions were designed to measure overall satisfaction, clarity, and perceived effectiveness of advising appointments.



Key Findings - Survey

Advisor Support and Academic Planning Evaluation

This section of the survey asked students to provide feedback on their advisor's communication and support during academic planning. Students rated how effectively their advisor manages multitasking while meeting with them and how clearly they explain degree requirements and program details. The survey also asked students to indicate their confidence in their academic plan after advising and to reflect on their past experiences registering for required courses. These questions were designed to capture students' perceptions of advisor clarity, guidance, and overall effectiveness in helping them navigate their academic path.



Key Findings - Survey

Suggestions to Improve Appointments

The section asked students to share what, if anything, they would change about the advising process. By providing open-ended responses, students could highlight challenges they face, suggest improvements, and offer insights into how advising appointments could better meet their needs. These responses help identify opportunities to enhance the overall advising experience.

"I wish freshman year advisors could be more thorough in explaining what classes to take so that classes can be planned out better."

"Navigating when classes are full"

"More advice on out of school opportunities like scholarships and internships."

"Offering more diagrams or lists to see what classes I need to take and what fulfills requirements."

"To have advisors who are more knowledgeable about more fields."

"I wish my advisor was required to be more knowledgeable about my specific major and courses."

Key Findings - Survey

Strengths and Positive Practices

This section asked students to describe one thing their advisor does particularly well. By gathering open-ended responses, the survey captures examples of effective advising practices and highlights areas where advisors excel. These insights provide a better understanding of strengths in the advising process and can inform best practices for improving student support.

"She's very supportive and has helped me stay motivated at times I was struggling and never let me feel judged or bad about myself"

"She lays everything out and gives lots of backup options if I'm not able to get into some classes."

"Makes good rapport; I feel like I'm talking to someone who knows what they're doing and cares."

"Is very prepared when talking about course restrictions/requirements that I am unsure about. They also give me great resources when I discuss personal or academic issues I'm having, which has helped me a lot."

"I love my advisor (Seth Peters). He does an amazing job helping out."

"She was eager and determined to learn CS requirements so that she could help me register and be on track for graduation."

Interview Format

Interviewees

The interviewees were Franklin College Academic Advisors, including a small sample of 5 advisors. They shared insights on advising practices, time management, and system use, helping identify challenges and opportunities to improve advising sessions.

Structure

We will interview five academic advisors for 15–20 minutes, covering five sections: workload and context, information lookup and efficiency, escalation and risk, confidence and consistency, and areas for improvement. The student survey includes seven sections that collect student background, the topics discussed during advising, rating-scale questions on the advising experience, and open-ended questions for detailed feedback.

Questions

The advisor interviews focused on key questions informed by the client's goals, including typical advising workflows, managing multiple systems, accessing information quickly, time sufficiency, and areas of inefficiency in the advising process.

1. Can you describe your role and the types of students you advise?
2. On average, how long is each advising appointment? [Metric]During an appointment, how often do policy or requirement questions arise? [Metric]
3. How many systems or tabs do you typically switch between during an appointment? [Metric - System Switching]
4. How often do you need to confirm a policy answer with Slack, supervisor, Registrar? [Metric - Policy Escalation Rate]
5. What parts of the advising process feel inefficient or repetitive? [Development]

Key Findings - Interviews

Advisor Roles & Student Populations

- Lead advisor for social sciences, humanities, fine arts, and biology (1st–4th year)
- Upper-division advisor for biology students (60+ credit hours), many on pre-health pathways
- Advisor for Interdisciplinary Studies (create-your-own major) program
- Advisor for freshman & sophomore students with a small caseload

Advising Load (Weekly & Daily)

- Most advisors handle:
- 5–6 appointments per day
- 25–30 appointments per week

One advisor with a smaller caseload averages:

- ~1 appointment per day / ~5 per week

Appointment Length

- Typical session length: 40–45 minutes

Some sessions:

- Scheduled for 30 minutes but often run longer
- Frequently extend into buffer/grace periods

Key Findings - Interviews

Policy and requirement questions appear in:

- ~90% of appointments
- Typically 5–10 different policy-related questions per meeting

Common topics:

- Graduation requirements
- Residency & core requirements
- Degree audits (DegreeWorks)
- Transfer credits & substitutions

Advisors typically juggle 4–5 systems per appointment:

- DegreeWorks
- SAGE
- Athena / Banner
- Bulletin
- Schedule of Classes
- Department-specific or pre-professional websites

Most time-consuming topics:

- Transfer coursework & substitutions/exceptions
- Degree requirement accuracy & academic standing
- Graduation vs. commencement confusion
- Graduate school planning & timelines
- System errors (DegreeWorks, transcripts)

Lookup time varies by familiarity:

- Instant–2 minutes for known policies
- 5–10 minutes for complex or unfamiliar questions

Some issues (exceptions, system errors) require:

- Follow-up outside the meeting (2–3 days)

Key Findings - Interviews

Escalation frequency varies widely:

- Almost never (some advisors rely on prior knowledge)
- Weekly for many advisors
- Up to 1 out of every 3 appointments
- Some advisors send 1–2 Slack messages per day to confirm answers

Advisors report:

- 3–5 questions per week (lower end)
- Up to 10–15 questions per week (about half of appointments)

Follow-ups often occur:

- After meetings
- Via email or Slack
- When preparing advising summaries

Depends on who is contacted:

- **Lead advisor / Slack:**
  - ~20 minutes to 2 hours (typical)
  - Sometimes instant or never answered
- **Admissions:**
  - ~within 1 hour
- **Registrar:**
  - ~3–4 hours to multiple days
  - Occasionally up to a week or more

Delays increase risk of:

- Giving incorrect graduation guidance
- Student misinformation
- Missed deadlines

High variability means:

- Advisors lack a consistent, reliable source of truth

Key Findings - Interviews

What Feels Inefficient or Repetitive

- Repeating the same major-specific information across appointments
- Redundant Slack questions with multiple or conflicting answers
- Policies with many exceptions that are hard to interpret
- Poor interdepartmental communication about policy updates
- Outdated or dead links when verifying requirements
- Time spent navigating:
  - DegreeWorks
  - Athena
  - Multiple messaging and scheduling systems
- Advisors often feel they are:
  - Teaching students how to use systems instead of advising

What an Instant Policy Tool Must Do Well

- Accuracy and consistency (top priority)
- Keep data frequently updated
- Translate policies into:
  - Clear, student-friendly language
  - Organized, manageable options
- Support advanced features like:
  - Prerequisite trees
  - Course boundaries
  - Warnings for courses that may not count

What Builds (or Breaks) Trust in a Tool

- Trust comes from:
  - Closed, controlled data sources (not broad web search)
  - Direct citations and clickable source links
  - Consistent answers over time
- Immediate distrust if:
  - No source is shown
  - Tool “guesses” or hallucinates answers
- Speed matters less than: Accuracy + consistency

Measuring Project Impact

Operational Impact

What we measure?

- Average lookup time (before vs. after)

Why it matters?

- Faster Advising Sessions
- Less interruptions during meetings

Risk Reduction

What we measure?

- Policy Escalation Rate (before vs. after)

Why it matters?

- Fewer Wrong Answers
- Less need to involve supervisors
- More consistent guidance

Human Impact

What we measure?

- Advisor Confidence Score (before vs. after)

Why it matters?

- Advisors trust the system
- Smoother conversations with students
- Reduced Stress

Future Plans

In the short term, we plan to develop a prototype advising support tool that can surface policy answers in real time during appointments within the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences. The tool will rely on a closed and trusted data source and will display direct citations so advisors can verify where each answer comes from. Initial testing will focus on high-frequency policy topics such as graduation requirements, transfer credit, and DegreeWorks-related questions with a small group of advisors.

In the long term, the goal is to create a single, authoritative source of truth for advising policies across the universities. This system would reduce lookup time, minimize the need for escalations, and improve consistency in policy interpretation. Ultimately, the tool would support faster appointments, more confident advisors, and lower institutional risk from incorrect or inconsistent advising.