



**Texas Higher  
Education  
COORDINATING BOARD**

**2022 Texas Rider Report:  
Advise TX  
College Advising Corps**

**Evaluation & Assessment Solutions for Education**

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
Division of College and Career Advising**

**October 2022**

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## Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board



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The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to serve as a resource, partner, and advocate for Texas higher education, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

### Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

### Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The THECB's core values are:

**Accountability:** We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

**Efficiency:** We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

**Collaboration:** We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

**Excellence:** We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

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## Executive Summary

Advise TX works in partnership with colleges and universities to serve students at participating high schools across the state, drawing on their infrastructure and resources, to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented Texas students entering and completing postsecondary education. In 2021-22, four university chapters—Texas A&M University, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Christian University, and Trinity University—together served 110 high schools in Texas.

Advise TX differs from other college access models in that Advise TX serves the whole school, rather than a limited cohort of students, to foster a schoolwide, college-going culture. Advise TX accomplishes this mission by placing exceptional recent college graduates from all fields of study on high school campuses as near-peer college advisers. Advise TX advisers receive intensive training before serving in a high school, completing a six-week practical curriculum that focuses on college access, college admissions, financial aid, student services, diversity, community service, and professionalism. Advisers focus on best-fit colleges, encouraging students to attend schools that will serve them well both academically and socially. Importantly, Advise TX participates in external evaluation to quantitatively measure the relationship between advising and college enrollment.

A randomized control trial study on Advise TX found that low-income and Hispanic students who met with an Advise TX adviser saw statistically significant college enrollment increases of 2 to 3 percentage points in the fall after high school graduation.<sup>1</sup> Our annual report on college enrollment outcomes for the graduating class of 2021 found a small decline in college attendance in Advise TX schools relative to students in other schools. Most of this decline is in four-year enrollment. Low-income students in both Advise TX and other schools were similar. There appears to be a small 0.7 percentage point increase in two-year attendance in Advise TX schools relative to others; however this is offset by a 0.8 percentage point decrease in four-year attendance among Advise TX schools relative to other schools. Similarly, in Advise TX schools, African American students saw a decline in two-year attendance of 1.9 percentage points and a 0.8 percentage point decline in four-year attendance when compared to other students. Hispanic students in Advise TX schools experienced a 0.5 percentage point increase in two-year attendance and a 2.2 percentage point decrease in four-year college attendance as compared to students in other schools.

Most recent analysis of college enrollment outcomes for the graduating class of 2021 revealed a rebound from the large decline in college attendance that occurred in the graduating class of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our matched comparison, we find that overall enrollment rates dropped by 1.4%. Enrollment rates for the low-income population served by Advise TX were unchanged, and among low-income students, enrollment in four-year college attendance dropped by 0.8 percentage points but increased by 0.7 percentage points in two-year college attendance.

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<sup>1</sup> Bettinger, E., & Evans, B. (2019). College guidance for all: A randomized experiment in pre-college advising. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 38(3), 579-599

## Background

Advise TX is a partner program of the national College Advising Corps (CAC) and aligned with the goals of the current Texas strategic higher education plan, *Building a Talent Strong Texas*. Advise TX is an innovative near-peer college access program that aims to increase the number of low-income, first-generation college, and other underrepresented students who enter and complete higher education. Advise TX advisers work to increase the proportion of students attending postsecondary public and private institutions of higher education, including community colleges and technical institutes. Advisers provide admissions and financial aid advising to students and their families through one-on-one and group sessions. Advisers help students identify colleges that will serve them well, complete admissions and financial aid applications, find the college that best fits their career aspirations and academic preparation, and enroll in college or university.

Participating high schools are selected based on specific criteria that identify high schools most in need of additional support. These criteria include more than 35% of the campus on free and reduced-price lunch, a direct-to-college going rate of less than 70%, fewer than 55% of students in a rigorous curriculum program, and a graduating class of more than 100 students. Advise TX serves all of the students in a participating school.

Over the last 12 years, CAC has worked with Dr. Eric Bettinger, Professor of Education at Stanford University and a partner with Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE), to prepare a report on the impact of the Advise TX program on college-going rates, based on a randomized, controlled trial study. The report provided an overview of Advise TX outcomes, specifically application and FAFSA completion rates and Advise TX matched-group data analysis of college enrollment, including overall college enrollment, impact on low-income students, and impacts by race. The study showed Advise TX increased college enrollment rates by more than 3 percentage points, especially for low-income students. The size of the high school was found to be a mediating factor in the success of Advise TX. Advisers increased enrollment rates overall, but in large schools, the increase in the number of college attendees provided smaller percentage changes compared with the percentage changes at smaller schools.

## Advise TX Short-Term Outcomes

During the 2021-22 school year, Advise TX served over 50,000 seniors enrolled across the four institutional partners programs. At an average school served by Advise TX, 69% of students were Hispanic, 17% were African American, and 79% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The students served by Advise TX in the class of 2021 were demographically similar to those served by Advise TX in the class of 2020.<sup>2</sup> The population of students served by Advise TX is purposeful, aligned with the goals of *Building a Talent Strong Texas*.

### Advise TX Adviser Outcomes

Advise TX advisers focus on assisting students in the application and enrollment process. Both advisers and program leaders track progress toward goals set on six key performance indicators found to be predictive of college enrollment and aligned to key strategies of *Building a Talent Strong Texas* (including those focused on student debt):

- Student actions
  - Submitting one or more college applications
  - Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
  - Registering for the SAT/ACT college entrance exam
- Adviser actions
  - One-on-one meetings with students
  - Meetings with students' families
  - Assisting students with FAFSA completion

Table 1 below shows the rates at which key college application activities were completed with assistance from Advise TX advisers, across Advise TX schools.

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<sup>2</sup> In the first section of this report on short-term outcomes, we present results from both the class of 2021 and class of 2022, when available. Currently, the classes of 2020 and 2021 are the most recent years of Texas Education Agency data available, while the class of 2022 is the most recent year available from College Advising Corps/Advise TX. The second section of this report on enrollment outcomes uses data for the class of 2021, which is the most recent year for which data is available.



**Table 1. Completion of Key Application Activities, 2021-22**

|   | Number of students |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Student actions</b>                                |                    |
| Submitting one or more college applications           | 33,697             |
| Completing the FAFSA                                  | 31,020             |
| Registering for SAT/ACT college entrance exam         | 17,380             |
| Submitted a scholarship application                   | 4,450              |
| Received any scholarship dollars                      | 1,632              |
| <b>Adviser actions</b>                                |                    |
| One-on-one meetings with students <sup>3</sup>        | 109,399            |
| Meetings with students' families <sup>4</sup>         | 16,998             |
| Any meetings with students about FAFSA                | 42,610             |
| Assisting students with FAFSA completion <sup>5</sup> | 33,388             |

Source: Advise TX internal tracking data, July 2022

Additionally, in 2021-22, CAC advisers helped students receive financial aid and scholarship offers totaling a minimum of \$275 million.<sup>6</sup> Every Advise TX student accepted to college was offered financial support (scholarships + aid) worth, on average, at least \$10,000.

## Application Rates

As noted above, about 33,500 students (69%) served by Advise TX reported to their adviser that they submitted at least one college application, either in state or out of state, in 2021-22. These students submitted almost 120,000 total college applications, and an adviser helped them complete more than 50,000 of those, nearly half of all applications (46%).

<sup>3</sup> Advisers meet with many students more than once; this number is the total number of 1:1 meetings that advisers held with students. Advisers also held over 40,000 small group meetings.

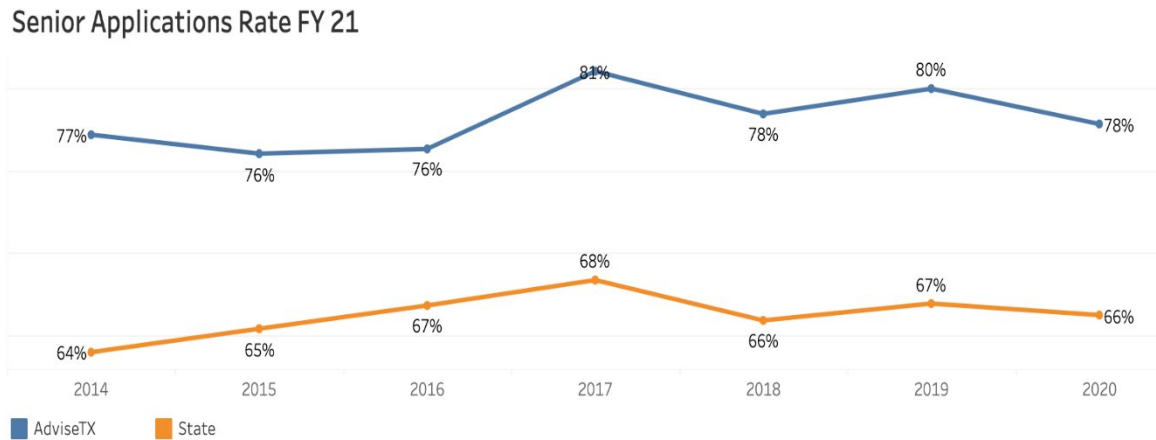
<sup>4</sup> This represents the total number of meetings held with a family member (or guardian) of a student.

<sup>5</sup> The number includes 1,091 times that an adviser assisted a student with completing an alternative financial aid form.

<sup>6</sup> Advisers track metrics like financial aid awards using an internal student information management system; these data are analyzed and reported on by College Advising Corps. Since some college enrollment decisions were not finalized when the school year ended, advisers are likely undercounting the total dollar amount for aid and scholarships accepted.

The most recent comparative data we have is for class of 2020. Figure 1 shows that 78% of seniors at Advise TX high schools applied to an in-state public institution, which is 12 percentage points higher than our estimate for all seniors in Texas.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 1. Percentage of Seniors Applying to TX Public Institutions**



Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: <https://www.highered.texas.gov/plan-pay-complete-college/exploring-college-options/advise-tx/advisetx-dashboards/#AdviseTX%20State%20Aggregated>

## FAFSA Rates

More than 31,000 students served by Advise TX completed the FAFSA in 2021-22.<sup>8</sup> Advise TX schools had a completion rate (64.3%), almost 2 percentage points above the overall state completion rate of 62.6%.<sup>9</sup> Advisers also logged 1,011 alternative financial aid forms submitted, which would increase the percentage of students completing a Department of Education or equivalent financial aid form to 65.5%.

While we do not have more recent comparative data for the classes of 2021 and 2022 on FAFSA submission, historically we see that students in Advise TX schools consistently submit a greater number of FAFSA applications than their counterparts. Furthermore, while we do not have overall FAFSA submission comparisons between Advise TX schools and state schools for the class of 2022, we do have some monthly data for class of 2021. Figure 3 shows that for the primary FAFSA submission months during the late fall and winter of 2020-21, students at Advise TX schools consistently had a higher submission rate compared to the state average.

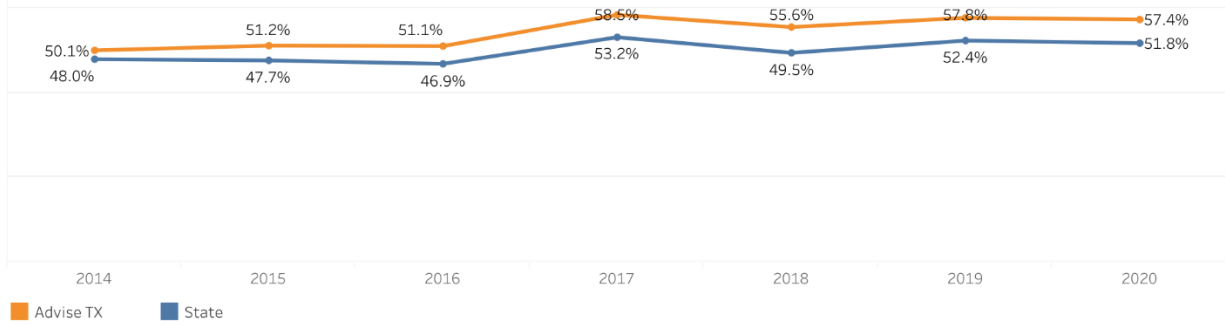
<sup>7</sup> Our estimates of application rates come from analyzing ApplyTexas data, which are not yet available for the classes of 2021 and 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Department of Education, July 01, 2022

<sup>9</sup> The Texas overall FAFSA completion rate is estimated per the National College Attainment Network, representing FAFSA completions through 7/01/2022. Compared to 2020, FAFSA submissions in Texas declined about 5 percentage points in 2021 among the types of schools Advise TX advisers serve, such as “high minority populations” and “Title 1 eligible.”

**Figure 2. Yearly FAFSA Submissions for Advise TX Schools and State Schools**

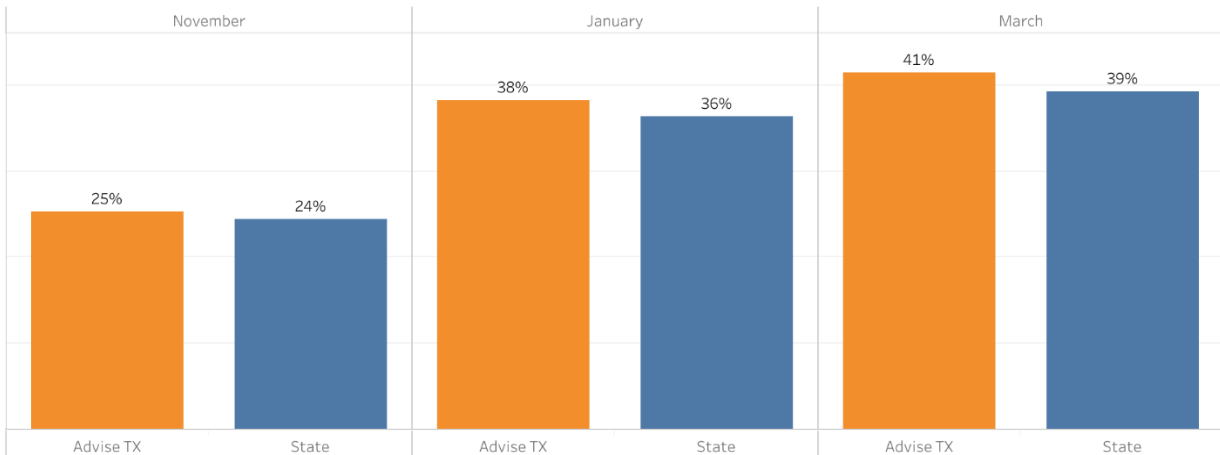
Yearly FAFSA Submission Rates FY21



Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: <https://www.highered.texas.gov/plan-pay-complete-college/exploring-college-options/advise-tx/advisetx-dashboards/#AdviseTX%20State%20Aggregated>

**Figure 3. Monthly FAFSA Submissions for Advise TX Schools and State Schools for Class of 2021**

Submission Rates Advise TX 2021 FAFSA Rates (AY 2020-21 November, January, March)



Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: <https://www.highered.texas.gov/plan-pay-complete-college/exploring-college-options/advise-tx/advisetx-dashboards/#AdviseTX%20State%20Aggregated>

# Advise TX Matched Group Data Analysis

## College Enrollment Outcomes

The ultimate goal of Advise TX is to improve college enrollment rates throughout the state. We draw on an analysis of college enrollment patterns to determine the impact of Advise TX on college matriculation.

### Propensity score matching

A difficulty in measuring impact is to identify a suitable comparison group. Advise TX serves some of the lowest-achieving schools in the state, and their college enrollment rates are already lagging. Simple comparisons across schools will always disadvantage perceived impact of Advise TX. To create comparisons, we use a matching technique commonly used in evaluation research in both education and health.<sup>10</sup> We use student characteristics to match students in Advise TX schools to similar students who are not in Advise TX schools.

While such matching techniques (frequently referred to as propensity score models) are commonplace and can produce unbiased estimates of the impact of Advise TX, they do have limitations. The main limitation is the quality of the matching. If the variables needed for accurately matching are too commonplace or not adequately predictive, then the matches will not be satisfactory and could be biased.<sup>11</sup>

**Overall college enrollment.** For this report, we first examined the impact on overall enrollment for students who completed high school in 2021.<sup>12</sup> Across all students, in the data we examined, the average college attendance rate in the fall after graduation was 44.0%. This is up from the prior year, when Covid had strong impacts on attendance. The four-year attendance rate was 20.9%, while the two-year enrollment rate was 26.4%. A small fraction of students attended both two-year and four-year colleges simultaneously, resulting in the averages in the respective sectors not adding up to the overall enrollment rate. The average attendance rate is considerably higher in two-year college sectors from the prior cohort; however, four-year attendance is similar to the prior year.

In our matched comparison, we find a decline of 1.4 percentage points in overall school-level measures of college attendance. This effect is entirely driven by four-year campus attendance, where enrollment rates for Advise TX students decreased by almost 2 percentage points relative to other students. Two-year college enrollment rates remain unchanged.

While the overall rate of college enrollment is an important metric, when we examine low-income and under-represented groups, there are important differences in the impact of Advise TX.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE) analysis using student-level Texas administrative data, July 2022

<sup>11</sup> A common way to gauge the success of the matching is to compare the predicted probability of being designated for participating in the treatment group based on the selected matching criteria, across treatment and control groups. Without matching, there is a 5.5 percentage point difference. With matching, there is no measurable differences in these likelihoods.

<sup>12</sup> This is the most recent graduating class for which full first-year enrollment data are available, given lags on enrollment data availability.

**Impact on low-income students.** Among low-income students, college enrollment rates were 37.7% overall, roughly a 4% increase from last year. As expected, the mean rate of enrollment is considerably lower than in the overall population.

In our matched comparison, we find that college enrollment rates remained steady for the low-income population in Advise TX schools. Two-year attendance increased by 0.7 percentage points. This result is statistically significant. Four-year attendance, however, decreased by 0.8 percentage points, still at a significant level. These impacts offset each other.

**Impacts by race.** We also estimated the impact of Advise TX for different racial groups. The results here are fairly consistent across racial groups. Enrollment rates are higher for the white sample as opposed to the other groups. Overall attendance rates for the graduating class of 2021 were 48.5% among whites, while it was around 40-41% for African American and Hispanic students.

The findings for racial groups are consistent, although they hide significant differences. For whites, there appears to be a small negative impact. Overall enrollment decreased by 1.7 percentage points. The decrease is entirely driven by declines in two-year enrollments. For Hispanics and African Americans, the overall impacts appear to be similar. For Hispanics, overall enrollment appears to fall by 1.3 percentage points, and it decreases as well for African American students by 1.9 percentage points.

The impact on any college enrollment, though, hides some notable differences. For Hispanics, two-year enrollment rose by 0.5 percentage points, while enrollment at four-year colleges declined by 2.2%. For African American students, enrollments decreased by 1.9 percentage points at two-year colleges and 0.8% at four-year colleges.

Table 2 provides a summary of the impacts on enrollment.

**Table 2. Advise TX Impacts on Enrollment for High School Class of 2021**

|                              | Baseline<br>Overall<br>Attendance | Advise TX<br>Difference in<br>Overall<br>Attendance | Advise TX<br>Difference in 4-<br>Year<br>Attendance | Advise TX<br>Difference in 2-<br>Year<br>Attendance |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Overall Sample               | 44.0%                             | -.014***  | -.019***  | -.001   |
| Free/Reduced Lunch<br>Sample | 37.7%                             | .001  | -.008***  | .007**  |
| Hispanic Sample              | 40.2%                             | -.013***  | -.022***  | .005*   |
| African American<br>Sample   | 41.3%                             | -.019***  | -.008*  | -.019***  |
| White Sample                 | 48.5%                             | -.017**   | -.004   | -.017**   |

Source: Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE) analysis using student-level Texas administrative data, July 2022  
NOTE: \* p-value ≤ 0.05, \*\* p-value ≤ 0.01, \*\*\* p-value ≤ 0.001

## Conclusion

Taken together, the results are not as strong as in prior versions of this report. Across multiple years, there has been a pattern of two-year college attendance increasing while four-year college attendance declines. This pattern is still apparent for particular subgroups. Specifically, Hispanic students and low-income students experienced 0.5 and 0.7 percentage point increases in two-year attendance, respectively. In the most recent year, enrollment rates were declining for the overall sample and among racial groups. Low-income students' college enrollment held constant.

It is important to assess these trends in light of the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic before assuming causality. Our matching strategy compares low-income and under-represented minorities in disadvantaged schools (Advise TX target populations) to those at less disadvantaged schools. Across the United States, many low-income high schools were differentially affected by the pandemic with a greater attrition of teachers and lower engagement in online and hybrid options for schooling. Even in places where the quality of schooling was not impacted, low-income communities and communities with significant populations of under-represented minorities were affected more strongly by Covid. If indeed this type of differential impact of Covid occurred, then we might have seen even additional lagging in enrollment rates than we found. Despite overall declines in enrollment, we still saw increases for specific subgroups, which speaks to the treatment effect of Advise TX. As the recovery continues, some of the hardest hit schools will develop more infrastructure to assist Advise TX.

In terms of improving college enrollment, we continue to find significant strength in Advise TX schools in terms of college applications filed and FAFSAs submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

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This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website:  
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