



# **A Report on the Effectiveness of Advise TX**

**Rider 51  
86th Texas Legislature**

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## Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board



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### Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to provide leadership and coordination for Texas higher education and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, 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.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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## Executive Summary

Advise TX works in partnership with colleges and universities 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. Four university chapters—Texas A&M University, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Christian University, and Trinity University—together serve 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 school-wide, 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. The purpose of this report is to summarize recent analysis of the completion of key college application activities by low-income students of color supported by Advise TX advisers, as well as outline improvements in college matriculation for these focal students.

Recently published Advise TX results from a randomized control trial study<sup>1</sup> conducted between 2011-12 and 2013-14 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. More recently, an analysis of college enrollment outcomes for the graduating class of 2017<sup>2</sup> found a similar impact. Overall, college enrollment rates improved by 1.2 percentage points for the low-income population when served by Advise TX. Further, African American students saw a 2.7 percentage point increase in four-year college attendance when served by Advise TX, and Hispanic students saw a positive increase in two-year college attendance.

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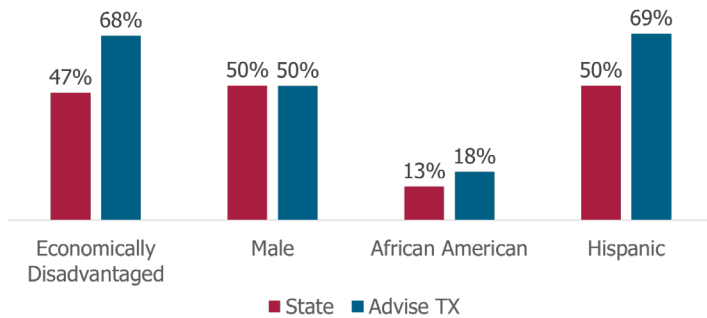
1. Bettinger, E., & Evans, B. (2019). [College guidance for all: A randomized experiment in pre-college advising](#). *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 38(3), 579-599.

<sup>2</sup> This is the most recent graduating class for which full first-year enrollment data are available, given lags on enrollment data availability.

## Advise TX Short-Term Outcomes

During the 2018-19 school year, Advise TX served 49,525 seniors in the Class of 2019. Of these students, 71 percent were Hispanic, 16 percent were African American, and 79 percent were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The students served by Advise TX in the Class of 2018 were demographically similar to those served by Advise TX in the class of 2019.<sup>3</sup> As shown in Figure 1 below, the population of students served by Advise TX in the Class of 2018 were more likely to be low-income students of color than students statewide. The population of students served by Advise TX is purposeful, aligned with the goals of the *60x30TX* plan.

**Figure 1. Characteristics of Students Served by Advise TX**



*Source: Texas Education Agency, High School Graduates Demographics, Class of 2018*

### 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 *60x30TX* (including those focused on student debt):<sup>4</sup>

- 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

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this report, we present results from both the Class of 2018 and Class of 2019. Currently, the Class of 2018 is the most recent year of Texas Education Agency data available, while the Class of 2019 is the most recent year available from College Advising Corps/Advise TX.

<sup>4</sup> Advisers track progress toward these metrics using an internal student information management system; these data are analyzed and reported on by College Advising Corps.

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

**Table 1. Completion of Key Application Activities, 2018-19**

	N
<b>Student actions</b>	
Submitting one or more college applications	41,032
Completing the FAFSA	30,259
Registering for SAT/ACT college entrance exam	40,427
Scholarship applications submitted	9,055
<b>Adviser actions</b>	
One-on-one meetings with students <sup>1</sup>	162,380
Meetings with students' families <sup>2</sup>	16,396
Assisting students with FAFSA completion	26,779

*Source: CAC Research & Evaluation Department analysis, July 2019*

1. Advisers meet with many students more than once. Advisers track each one-on-one meeting held. Advisers met one-on-one with 41,340 unique seniors (83% of all seniors served).

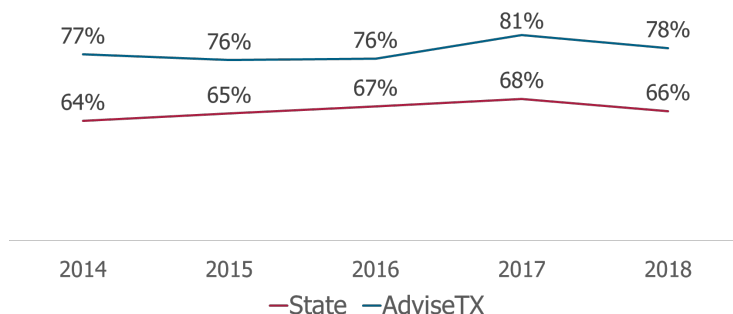
2. This represents the number of meetings held with families.

## Application Rates

As noted above, more than 41,000 students (83%) served by Advise TX reported to their adviser that they submitted at least one college application, either in-state or out-of-state, in 2018-19.

For the Class of 2018, Advise TX schools continued to outpace the state in the percentage of seniors applying to Texas public institutions, with 78 percent of seniors in Advise TX applying, compared with 66 percent of students statewide.

**Figure 2. Percent of Seniors Applying to TX Public Institutions**



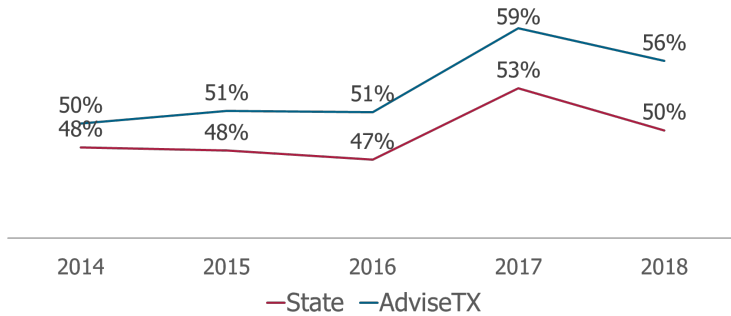
*Source: Texas Education Agency, High School Seniors (Class of 2014 to Class of 2018); ApplyTX Applications Submissions*



## FAFSA Rates

More than 30,000 students served by Advise TX completed the FAFSA in 2018-19. Advise TX schools continued to have a higher FAFSA submission rate (56%) compared with the state overall (50%).

**Figure 3. FAFSA Submission Rates**



Source: Texas Education Agency High School Seniors (Class of 2014 to Class of 2018); FAFSA Application Submissions  
Note. FAFSA open date changed from January to October of the academic year, starting for the class of 2017.

# 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 two analyses of college enrollment patterns to determine the impact of Advise TX on college matriculation.

**Descriptive findings.** Looking descriptively, we observe that students in key subgroups served by Advise TX closed college enrollment gaps with students statewide. For example, in both 2017 and 2018, Advise TX economically disadvantaged students enrolled in college at a rate that was 3 percentage points higher than the state (49 percent of Advise TX students and 46 percent of students statewide in 2018). The gap between African American students served by Advise TX and African American students statewide was closed in both 2017 and 2018, with 47 percent and 48 percent enrolling. Similar trends were observed looking at closed gaps between Hispanic students served by Advise TX and Hispanic students statewide: 50 percent of students in each group enrolled in 2017 and 49 percent in each group in 2018 enrolled.

Conversely, a persistent gap in enrollment continued for male students served by Advise TX. Approximately 3 percent more male students statewide enrolled in college in the past two academic years than did male Advise TX students.<sup>5</sup>

**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>6</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>7</sup>

### *Overall College Enrollment*

For this report, we first examined the impact on overall enrollment for students who completed high school in 2017.<sup>8</sup> Across all students, the average college attendance rate in the fall after graduation was 52.3 percent in the data we examined. The four-year attendance rate was 34 percentage points while the two-year enrollment rate was 23.4 percent. A small fraction of students attended both two-year and four-year colleges simultaneously, the averages in the respective sectors not adding up to the overall enrollment rate.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: THECB Research & Evaluation analysis, June 2019

<sup>6</sup> Source: Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE) analysis using student-level Texas administrative data, July 2019

<sup>7</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 6 percentage point difference. With matching, there is no measurable differences in these likelihoods.

<sup>8</sup> This is the most recent graduating class for which full first-year enrollment data are available, given lags on enrollment data availability.

In our matched comparison, we find no overall school-level impact on college attendance. College enrollment rates went up by 0.03 percentage points, but the impact is not statistically significant. It also presents a contrast in that two-year enrollments increased by 0.3 percentage points while four-year enrollment rates decreased by 0.7 percentage points. The aggregate impact across both sectors remains statistically insignificant.

While the overall rate of college enrollment is an important metric, the overall results do not reflect differences in college enrollments by those target populations Advise TX is aimed to serve. Advise TX prioritizes improving enrollment for low-income and under-represented groups.

#### *Impact on Low Income Students*

Among low-income students, college enrollment rates were 46.1 percent overall, 32.3 percent in four-year colleges, and 16.5 percent in two-year colleges. 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 improved by 1.2 percentage points for the low-income population, which is statistically significant. Most of this is explained by two-year attendance that improved by 1.2 percentage points. This result is also statistically significant. Four-year attendance improved by 0.4 percentage points, although this result is not statistically different from zero.

These impacts strongly indicate a positive impact of Advise TX, particularly since this is the population prioritized within Advise TX schools.

#### *Impacts by Race*

We also estimated the impact for different racial groups. The results here are mixed.

Among different racial groups, whites have the highest rates of college attendance. Overall attendance rates for the graduating class of 2017 were 54.7 percent. Attendance rates for whites at four-year colleges and two-year colleges were 34.4 and 27.2 percent, respectively.

Nearly 32 percent of students of color attend four-year colleges and 24 percent of these student attend two-year colleges. Hispanic rates of overall attendance were 49.3 percent. Attendance rates at four-year and two-year colleges were 34.0 and 18.5 percent, respectively. About 50.7 percent of all African American students attend college.

We found no impact of the program on Caucasian students; the point estimates are small and less than 0.1 percentage points. For Hispanics, the overall impact appears to be statistically insignificant and close to zero. This hides some heterogeneity in that four-year enrollment falls while two-year enrollment increases. For African American students, the results were also mixed. While the aggregate impact appears to be close to zero and statistically insignificant, enrollment rates increased by 2.7 percentage points at four-year colleges. For two-year colleges, enrollment declined by 1.7 percentage points. For these students, Advise TX seems to be moving students from two- to four-year colleges.

Table 2 provides a summary of the impacts on enrollment.

**Table 2. Advise TX Impact on Enrollment**

	Baseline overall attendance	Advise TX Difference in Overall Attendance	Advise TX Difference in 4-year Attendance	Advise TX Difference in 2-year Attendance
Overall Sample	52.3%	0.03	-0.70	0.30
Free/Reduced Lunch Sample	46.1%	1.18**	0.41	1.18**
Hispanic Sample	49.3%	-0.19	-1.72**	0.97
African American Sample	50.7%	0.75	2.67**	-1.71**
White Sample	54.7%	0.02	0.01	-0.06

*Source: EASE analysis using student-level Texas administrative data, July 2019*

*Note: Asterisks denote statistical significance.*

## Conclusion

Taken together, these results demonstrate that Advise TX is a critical partner in addressing the educated population and completion goals of the *60x30TX* state higher education plan. Advise TX accelerates college enrollment for traditionally underserved students and helps to close enrollment gaps for target student subgroups. Overall, college enrollment rates improved by 1.2 percentage points for low-income students served by Advise TX. Further, African American students saw a 2.7 percentage point increase in four-year college attendance when served by Advise TX, and Hispanic students saw a positive increase in two-year college attendance.

Key to this success is the deep engagement of advisers in the college application process of the students they serve: Meeting with nearly 50,000 Texas seniors more than 162,000 times during the 2018-19 school year, advisers supported more than 41,000 college applications, more than 9,000 scholarship applications, and 29,500 FAFSA submissions. The path to college enrollment would have been more challenging without this adviser support.



This document is available on the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website](#).

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