

# Academic Advising: A “missing link” between access and success in South African higher education?

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# Overview

- Why is academic advising relevant for South Africa?
- Defining academic advising?
- A brief history of advising at the UFS
- Impact of a data driven approach
- Lessons learnt to date...
- The way forward



# Why is academic advising relevant for South Africa?

- **Literary perspective**

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don't much care where—” said Alice.

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

“—so long as I get SOMEWHERE,” Alice added as an explanation.

“Oh, you're sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

- Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, 1865



# Why is academic advising relevant for South Africa?

- **Data rationale: SAHE access with limited chance of success?**
  - 19.8% of students entering in the 2005 cohort in contact mode had graduated after 3 years of study, 57.1% after 6 years of study, and 63.6% after 10 years of study... While all students need to improve their throughput rates in minimum time, support for African and Coloured students to improve their performance is a critical equity issue.
    - 2000-2008 Undergraduate Cohort Studies- DHET, 2016



# Why is academic advising relevant for South Africa?

- **Political rationale: We need to transform higher education**
  - “This is the true meaning of transformation – when all students entering the system have a reasonable chance of success and access to powerful forms of knowledge and practices that will enable them to enter the productive economy and improve their life chances and that of their families.”

- DHET, 2016



# Why is academic advising relevant for South Africa?

- **Empowering student agency**

- Students are among the groups least informed about higher education [choices, outcomes and processes].

(Mahat & Goedegebuure, 2014)

- # FeesMustFall (UFS)

- “The review of academic advising in all faculties. We need consistent and credible academic advising as a fundamental academic support base programme”
- Advising helps to limit costly decisions (mistakes)

- What do students say about academic advising:

- *Clarity is power*



# Defining academic advising?

The primary purpose of academic advising is to facilitate student learning and success through collaboration for a meaningful and attainable educational plan.

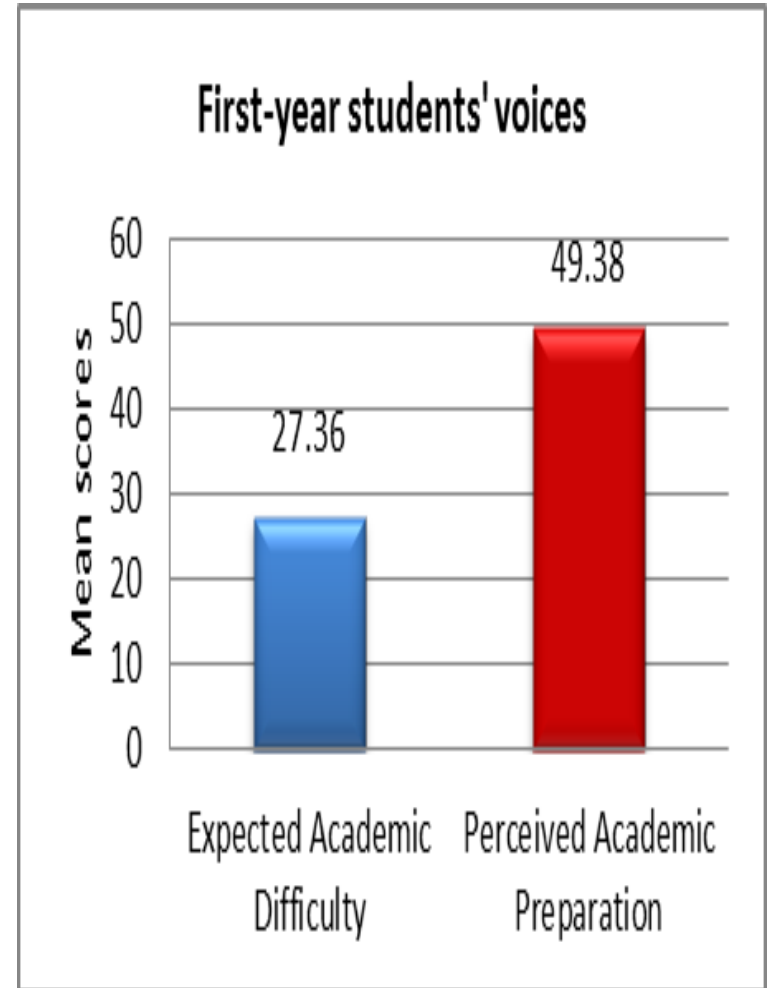
University of the Free State (UFS) definition:

- Academic Advising (AA) at the is a developmental teaching and learning process where the institution establishes and fosters a relationship with students and supports them to succeed academically and in the future as life-long learners.



# A brief history of advising at the UFS

- Catalyst - Student Engagement Research
- Developing a data driven understanding of UFS students
- First generation
  - 66% of first years
  - 69% of seniors
- Credit Overload research
  - Staff were “killing with kindness/ lack of discipline/ negligence”



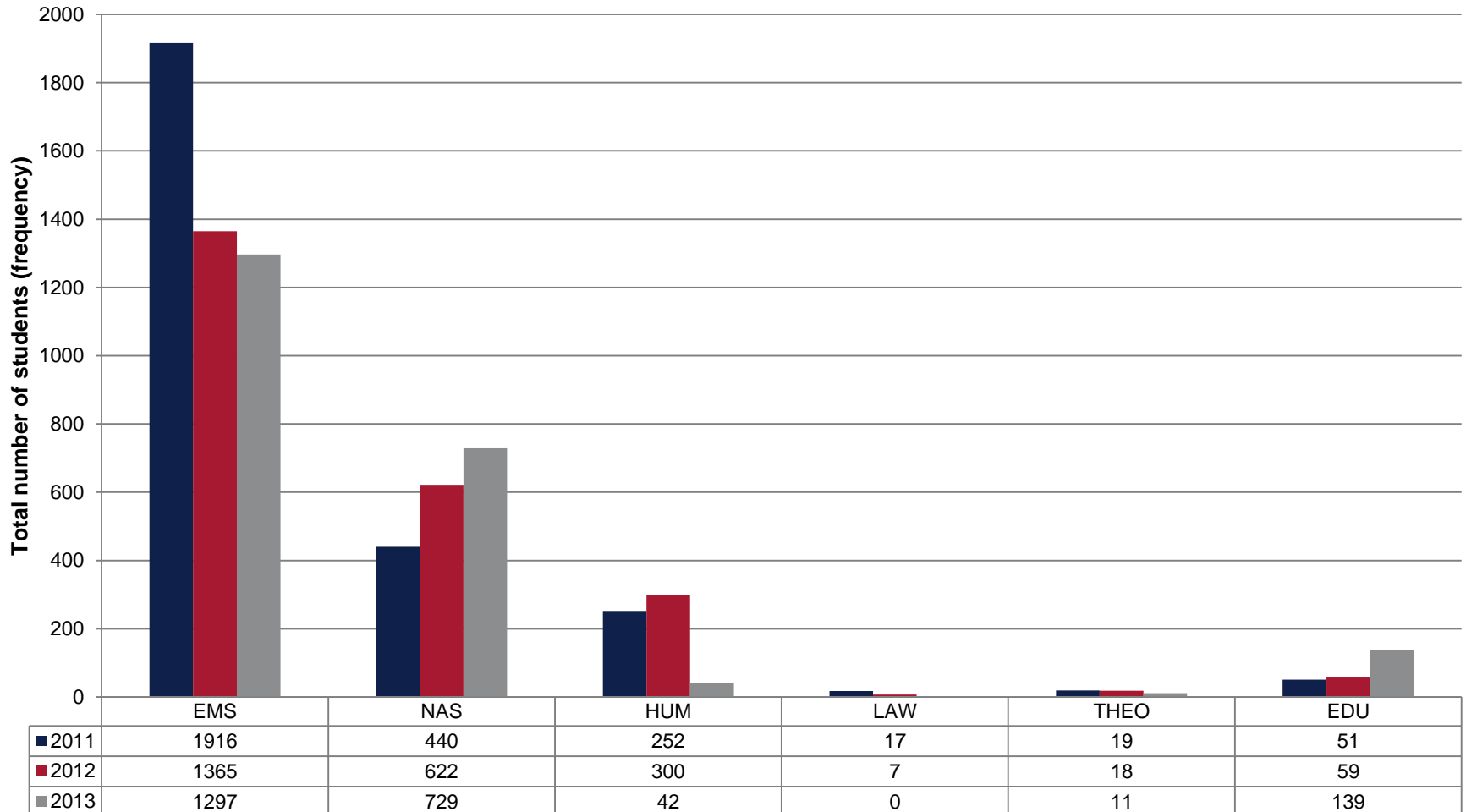
Before University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE)



# A brief history of advising at the UFS

- Improvement in Credit Overload

Faculty distribution of credit load (2011-2013)



# A brief history of advising at the UFS

- Impact of a data driven approach
  - Ripple effect
    - Greater focus on a data driven understanding of students
    - Curricular review – Create clear pathways
    - Review of registration and application process
      - Process re-engineering initiative
    - Greater institutional focus resulting in faculty appointments



# Lessons learnt to date...

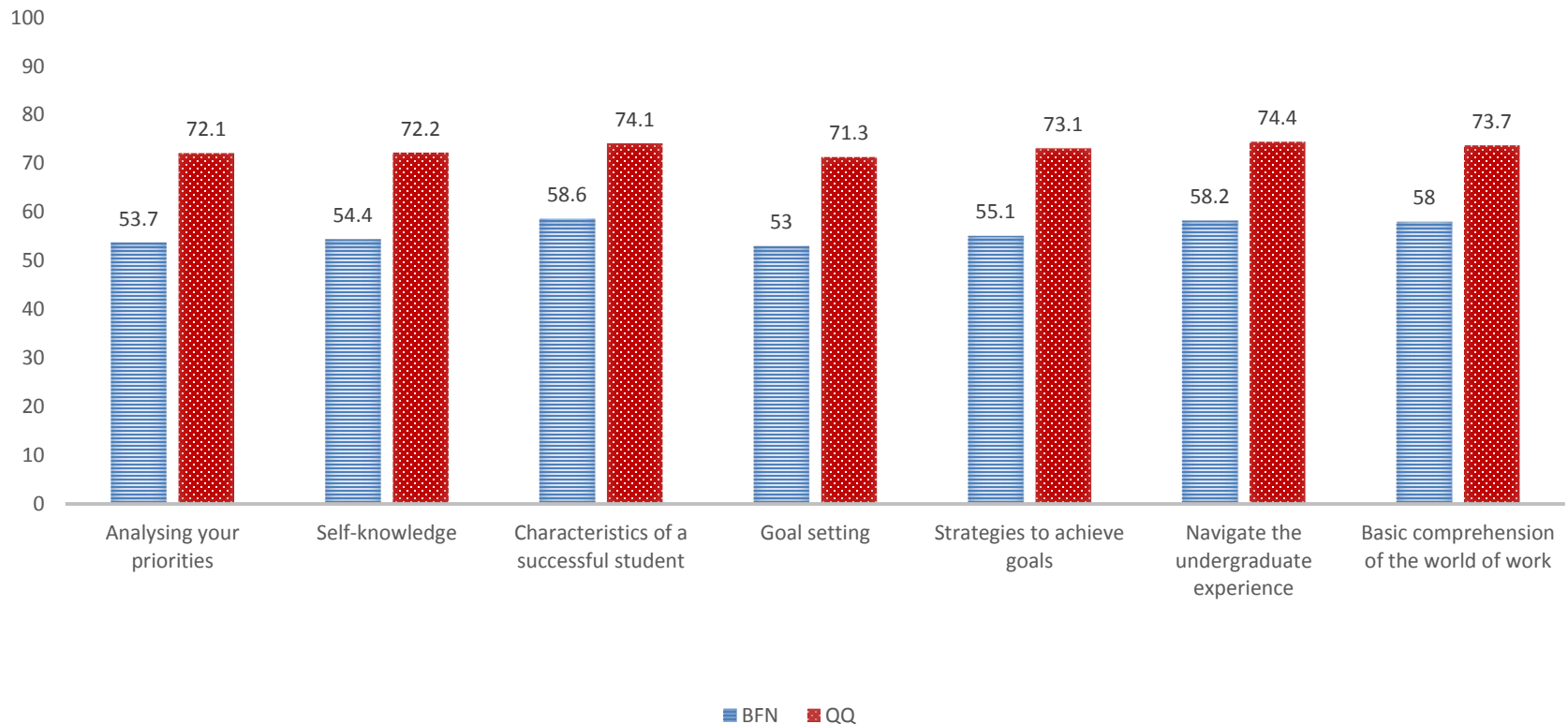
- Focus individual advising on students that need it
  - Early identification of students is vital
- Group Advising in UFS 101 – 6588 students
- Academic advising is provide an intentional referral system that helps to optimise the use of existing support services
  - Faculty advisors
  - Peer advising referral network
- Need for professionalization of Academic Advising



# UFS101 – Evaluation Data

- What did you learn that you did not know before?

SKILLS ACQUIRED IN UFS101 - UNIT 2 (%)



# The way forward

- Predictive analytics
  - Early Warning System
- Use of technology for individualised support
  - Student Success Portal
- Network and integrate success initiatives





# A comparison of Career Advising and Career Counseling

	<b>Career Advising</b>	<b>Career Counseling</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	To help students make academic decisions that incorporate knowledge of academic/career relationships and possibilities	To assist students with career development problems; may be therapeutic
<b>Content</b>	Integration of self, academic, and career information leading to academic decision making	Resolution of career-related problems and concerns
<b>Methods and Techniques</b>	Individual/group advising Academic coursework Internet searches Computer-assisted programs Workshops Distance	Individual/group counseling Testing expertise Personal and career information resources as needed

Adapted from Gordon, 2006

# A comparison of Career Advising and Career Counseling

	<b>Career Advising</b>	<b>Career Counseling</b>
<b>Advisor/Counselor or Competencies</b>	<p>Advising skills (for example, teaching, communication)</p> <p>Knowledge of career decision-making theoretical frameworks</p> <p>Technological competence</p>	<p>Job-search related assistance if indicated</p> <p>Counseling skills and techniques</p> <p>Assessment knowledge and skills</p> <p>Knowledge of career decision-making theory</p> <p>Technological competence</p>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<p>Realistic and satisfying academic decisions made</p> <p>Knowledge of related career fields known</p> <p>Plans for implementing decision carried out</p> <p>Decision-making skills learned</p>	<p>Career development problems resolved</p> <p>Knowledge and skills for future career/life planning acquired</p>