

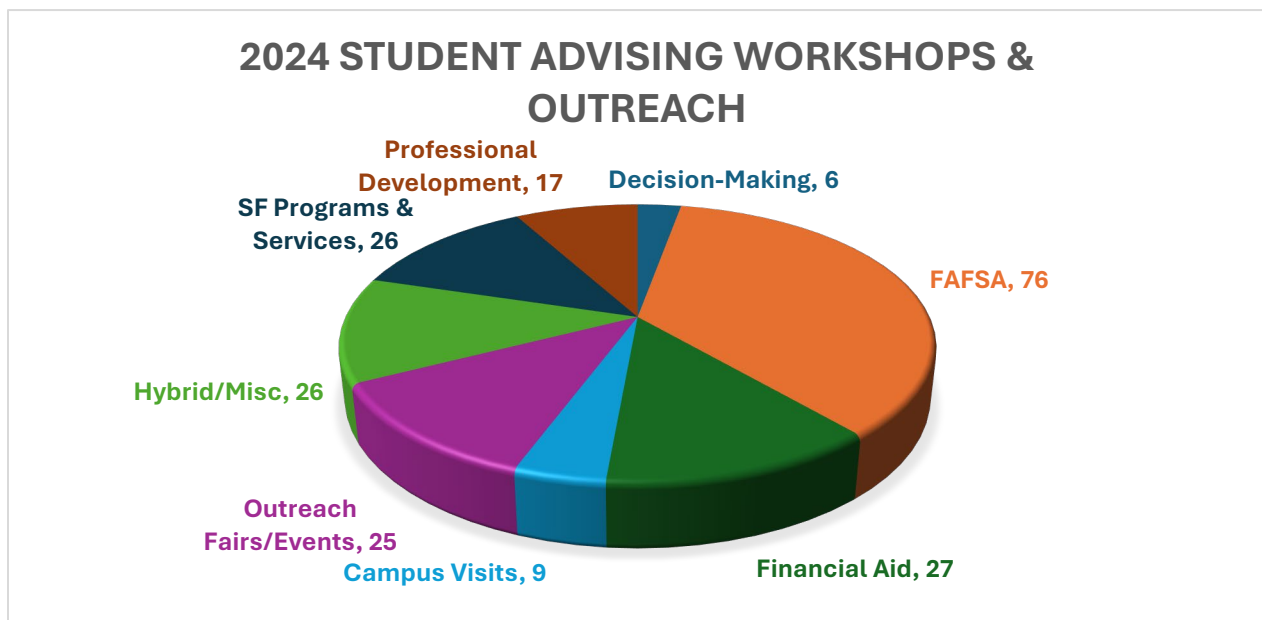
2024 Student Advising Program Report

Students and families seeking financial assistance for college in 2024 faced significant challenges: a retooled “better” FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) that was far from improved, several announcements of college closures, including Fontbonne University (summer, 2025), and myriad examples of broken promises from various federal and state agencies upon which students had come to rely. Despite all these barriers to success, the Foundation’s student advisors stood by students with optimism, expertise, and, most importantly, a steadfast belief in what they know students will achieve, regardless of the challenges they face.

The need for objective, timely, and compassionate advice about paying for college grows each year, especially as the landscape of financial aid and college access changes rapidly.

- In 2024, the Student Advising team, which was comprised of six full-time advisors, delivered workshops locally, regionally, and nationally, both in-person and virtually. These workshops reached students, families, and other professionals; provided educational opportunities on critical topics including financial aid, the FAFSA, and affordability; and ensured students and families had the information necessary to make informed decisions.
 - In total, **199** outreach events reached **4,415** individuals.
 - Advisors provided, or coordinated, training and education to **668** professionals through **17** workshops.
- Student Advisors reached **1,258** individual students, along with their family members. The depth of support provided is evidenced by the fact that Student Advisors provided support to these students through **5,838** interactions, which averages *4.6 interactions per student*.

In total, Student Advisors reached **6,309** individuals in 2024, holding space for students’ excitement for their future as well as their worry. Through authentic relationship building, advisors helped students navigate a fraught landscape and move forward with the pursuit of their postsecondary plans.



Advisors continue to reach more students and families, ensuring as many individuals as possible in the region have access to information, resources, and support when navigating the college financial aid process. The team is also closer than ever to returning to a reach not seen since 2019.

	2019 ¹	2020 ²	2021 ³	2022 ⁴	2023 ⁵	2024
Workshops/Events	162	97	60	104	177	199
# Of Individual Students Advised	1,453	1,460	774	1,024	1,147	1,258
Total # of Individuals Advised	6,899	4,049	1,966	3,346	5,950	6,309

While providing a depth of service to individual students was their top priority, advisors also sought to reach as many students as possible through workshops and creative outreach.

Persistence Advising

Relationships are a priority in the Foundation’s advising approach and the combination of expertise, warmth, compassion, and care allows advisors to engage with students throughout their education. All Foundation students are assigned an advisor who serves as their primary point of contact throughout their college experience. Advisors seek to build meaningful relationships, rooted in the student’s individual needs and goals, so that support can be personalized.

For newly awarded Scholarship Foundation students, the relationship with an advisor often begins over the summer when they are asked to complete a planning assessment. The planning assessment prompts students to evaluate their academic, financial, community living and learning, and basic needs plans, to ensure they have everything lined up for the coming academic year. In 2024, each of the **156** newly awarded students completed an assessment and advisors provided additional support to **88** of those students to help adjust or strengthen their plans. This process is the foundation of the student-advisor relationship and provides valuable insight into students’ circumstances and how best to support them moving forward.

Flourish

Among the support provided to students under the advising program is [Flourish](#), the Foundation’s mental health initiative. As the program enters its third year, it has continued to grow and, since its launch in December 2022, **40** students have participated in the program. In 2024, **36** students attended **421** therapy sessions, and the Foundation reimbursed a total of **\$50,878** to therapists. Furthermore, staff have continued to refine the program in response to feedback and better understanding of students’ experiences. Efforts continue to identify and remove barriers, as well as promote the program.

Accomplishments and Goals

Students and advisors persevered through an extremely complex and frequently frustrating set of challenges in 2024. Nevertheless, they stayed the course, maintaining Foundation values, principles, and priorities in the midst of so much disruption. The advising team never wavered from its commitment to students and delivered objective, critical information and support; built relationships of trust; and advocated with, and for, students. Advisors

¹ [2019 Advising Report](#)

² [2020 Advising Report](#)

³ [2021 Advising Report](#)

⁴ [2022 Advising Report](#)

⁵ [2023 Advising Report](#)

validated student fears, anxiety, and anger as they navigated complications that were often charged with uncertainty. Along the way, advisors also celebrated student achievements and milestones, honoring all that was accomplished, and relationships remained the most critical aspect of advising.

As 2025 gets underway, challenges and barriers continue to arise for college-seeking students. Structural and systemic obstacles that have perpetuated inequities in college access and degree completion for decades are becoming further entrenched. Though markedly better than last year, FAFSA challenges persist in hampering some students' access to critical financial aid. Students face a great deal of uncertainty, and advisors are steadfast in their commitment to being present; listening and responding to questions and concerns; and providing expert advice to students. Specific goals include:

- Developing summer interventions for students, primarily those in the class of 2025, to ensure they have information, resources, and support as they finalize college plans for the next academic year.
- Strengthening existing school and program partnerships to identify opportunities to connect with students earlier, and more often.
- Promoting and growing Flourish, serving more students through this critical mental health program.

Conclusion

While the challenges of the past year, and those on the horizon, must be acknowledged and addressed, students' needs remain the focal point of Student Advising. The importance of advisors' work—not just what they do, but *how* they do it—cannot be understated. Relationships are an invitation to witness others' experiences, and advisors are deeply privileged to walk with so many on their journey to and through college. No matter what lies ahead, advisors are committed to students, always.