

**ASSESSMENT PROJECT:
IMPROVING ACADEMIC ADVISING AT DENVER LAW¹**

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A. The Problem That We Identified. Responses to the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) show that from 2014 to 2016 few of our third-year students, relative to the same cohort of students from other law schools, offered positive views of academic advising at Denver Law. (Figure 1, see page 4 of this memo) On a more positive note, during the same three years the percentage of 1Ls expressing satisfaction with Denver Law’s academic advising program rose steadily—from 40% to 45% to 51%. (Figure 2) We might charitably attribute this modest upward trend to efforts to improve academic advising at our law school the past several years.² As well, there is evidence suggesting that ratings voiced by 1Ls may become the basis for ratings expressed by the same cohort in succeeding years, as this group becomes 2Ls. (Figure 3) Thus, concentrating on making academic advising available and attractive to 1Ls may lead to higher ratings expressed when they are 3Ls.³

B. Response. Based on these findings, in the fall of 2016 the Standing Committee on Academic Advising proposed that a sequence of events and meetings be organized under the rubric, “March Is Advising Month.” First, we continued efforts made in recent years, tailoring these to the new schedule for 2017. For example, we moved the Annual Advising Fair from October to March. We once again held, but at an earlier date, the springtime Certificate Program Lunch Session featuring faculty directors from the six programs. We continued to make presentations on “Your JD Journey at Denver Law.” Second, we designed a series of “focused advising sessions.” These covered areas of the law we believed would attract the interest of at least some students. The Committee then considered other areas of law that might be covered during the Advising month, relying especially on a document, “1L Interest in Practice Areas” compiled by the Denver Law Program Mentoring Program. (Appendix 1, attached) Eventually, we settled on presenting twelve focused advising sessions.

C. The Resulting Program. The “March Is Advising Month” schedule we constructed was comprehensive and busy. (Appendix 2) Participation across the many events and meetings was broad and included:

- Faculty representing the Certificate Programs
- Faculty teaching and writing in areas of the law not represented by the Certificate Programs
- Clinical Program Faculty
- Externship Program Faculty
- Advocacy Center Faculty

¹ This Assessment Project is dedicated to Patty Powell. As Assistant Dean of Student Affairs from 2014 to 2016, Patty identified the need for our law school to improve academic advising, and she became a major force in responding to that need.

² Discussions—informal at first and then more formal—among faculty, administration and staff on how to improve academic advising have been on-going for at least three years. For examples of concrete output that resulted, see <http://www.law.du.edu/documents/academic-advising/platform.pdf> and <http://www.law.du.edu/documents/academic-advising/pathways.pdf>.

³ This observation noted, the Committee recognizes the necessity of making improved academic advising available to 2Ls, 3Ls and 4Ls, as well.

- The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
- The Student Affairs Office
- The Registrar's Office
- The Office of Career Development and Opportunities
- The Dean's Office

We publicized "March Is Advising Month" to students in the following ways:

- Poster designed out of Stef Carroll's office, put up widely throughout the law school
- Email from Dean Moffat re JD Journey presentations sent to 1Ls Tuesday 2/21
- Multiple flyers posted on the law school kiosk system, running throughout March
- Email from Dean Moffat re "So You Want to Be" sessions sent to 1Ls Wednesday 3/8
- Second email from Dean Moffat re "So You Want to Be Sessions" sent to 1Ls Friday 3/24, as Spring Break concluded
- Flyers posted on bulletin board on Floor 1 and on tripods

The focused advising sessions, twelve in all, represented the biggest addition to our slate of advising opportunities. Each lasted 25 minutes. We did two a day, from noon to 1 pm, all in the same room (270). The first session was entitled, "So You're Not Sure What Kind of Lawyer You Want to Be." The eleven that followed each concentrated on a particular area of law. Participants included doctrinal faculty, the Clinic, the Externship Program, the CDO and the Center for Advocacy. Student Affairs and the Registrar's Office also sent representatives to these meetings.

All focused advising sessions followed a similar format. We began with a short description of our efforts to improve academic advising, including identifying Randy as the academic advising coordinator. We briefly addressed the nature of law school course selection, pointing out the abrupt shift from first year, when all decisions on courses and professors are made by the law school, to the second year and beyond, when the burden to learn and make informed choices rests with the students. We stressed the need for students to speak to and learn from a variety of advisors. Along with the above sources, we identified fellow students and practicing attorneys as valuable advisors. Randy then asked the faculty member(s) acting as primary or lead advisers about (1) the kinds of careers engaged in by attorneys in the particular area of law and (2) how to use the second and third year of law school to develop expertise in that area. Throughout the discussion, we brought in perspectives from the Clinical and Externship Programs, CDO, Student Affairs and others. We worked student questions into the conversation. At the end we imparted the message that a meeting like this is a starting point. Students should reach out to the individuals they see in the room today and anyone else at the law school and in the legal community for more in-depth discussion.

Attendance for all events included in "March Is Advising Month" (Appendix 3):

- The JD Journey session for evening students was held during an LP class meeting. All students in the course attended.
- The JD Journey session for day students drew only 8 students.
- The Certificate Program Lunch Session drew 30 students, down a good deal from prior years.
- The Annual Advising Fair drew 100 students, roughly on a par with prior years.
- The Focused Advising Sessions drew over 100 students in total to all twelve meetings. Some

students attended more than one session. Attendance at various sessions ran from a low of 2 to a high of 21.

- Excepting the Annual Advising Fair, nearly all students attending throughout were 1Ls.

D. Follow-up 1. At a faculty luncheon held April 11, 2017, Viva and Randy presented topics related to ABA accreditation and assessment, including the efforts aimed at improving academic advising described above. Comments received that day from faculty members included:

- Several faculty members commented positively on the pathways we have published; this was the first time they were aware of this resource for students.
- Effective advising requires personal contact and not just access to information; i.e., published pathways are not enough.
- Past attempts to assign all students to faculty members for advising did not pan out; and it is likely not all faculty members will want to be academic advisers.
- Faculty members who do wish to participate actively as academic advisors should have access to basic information required of advisors outside their area of knowledge and expertise.
- Our Mentor Program is a potentially valuable tool for advising; can we engage these Mentors more in our advising efforts?
- The many events captured under the rubric “March Is Advising Month” are valuable resources for students; however, attendance remains optional. Though instituting the system of CPD Credits incentivized student participation, we might consider a one JD-credit requirement for all 1Ls, a portion of which would encompass our academic advising program.

E. Follow-up 2. The Standing Committee on Academic Advising met on May 23, 2017⁴, and discussed efforts to improve academic advising at the law school during Spring, 2017. Results of that conversation:

1. Timing

- The Spring semester, prior to the course registration period, remains the prime time.
- Three factors possibly holding down attendance are
 - Scheduling of other events on the same days as academic advising events; we need to be more aware of all events going on and, in our own programs and efforts, not create events competing with the academic advising sessions.
 - The sheer number of events means that nothing stands out.
 - Students are busy mid-term with LP written projects due and many classes holding mid-term exams.
- Suggestion: begin academic sessions earlier, say, mid-February. “March Is Advising Month” becomes “Advising Month at Denver Law.”
- Suggestion: Pack academic advising events into the period immediately after Spring Break and before course registration begins.

⁴ Attending: Eric Bono (Assistant Dean, Career Services), Jess Boynton (Assistant Dean, Student Affairs), Stef Carroll (new member; Director for Strategic Initiatives), Emily Cederberg (Registrar), John Farrell, Lexi Freeman, Chris Newman (new member), Laura Rovner and Randy Wagner.

2. How do we involve full-time faculty?

- Create a mini-advising page, two sides of one sheet giving faculty members (a) basic information about requirements and (b) resources in the building to send students to if they seek more detailed information.
- Hold a faculty luncheon for faculty interested in participating in academic advising. This should be held early in the semester, perhaps in January since most of our efforts are undertaken in the Spring semester.
- How about an evening faculty luncheon or meeting to reach adjunct faculty who also do a fair amount of career and academic advising?
- Materials for the full-time faculty can be adapted for use by adjunct faculty, then adapted for use by Mentors.

3. What can we do for 2Ls?

- Create an October schedule of academic advising sessions. This can be smaller overall than the Spring schedule, mostly aimed at 1Ls. Registration next fall begins November 16. Perhaps schedule 2L sessions right after mid-term exams.
- Think about a “Life Cycle of the Law Student,” identifying periods or points in time when students will be most open to academic advising. Publish this timeline.

4. Miscellaneous

- Externship Office reports its classroom component is getting a makeover.
- We should include the Public Good Distinction in advising materials.
- The Clinic reports its application process went well.
- CDO reports that only 18 1Ls did not fulfill the CPD requirement (which offers credit for attending academic advising sessions).
- We would like to include Cindy Goldberg from Graduate Legal Studies in our meetings/efforts.

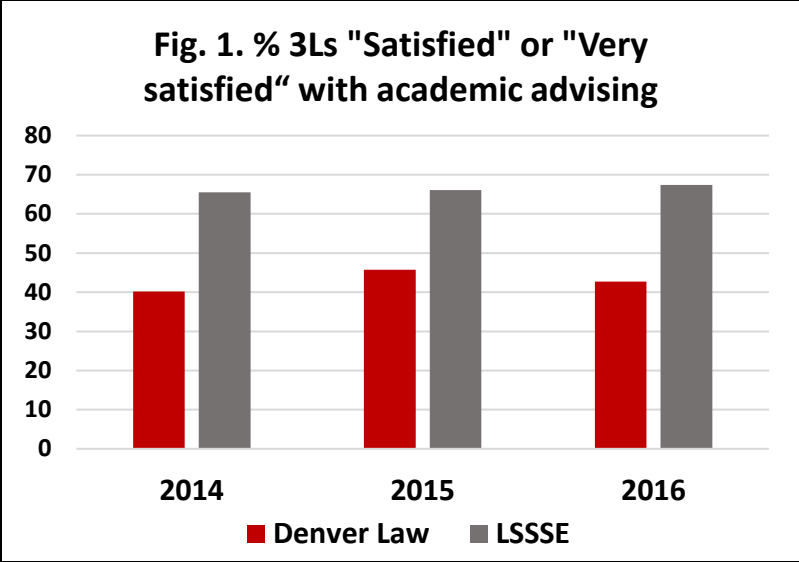
F. Did our efforts to improve academic advising make a difference?

1. Three accomplishments

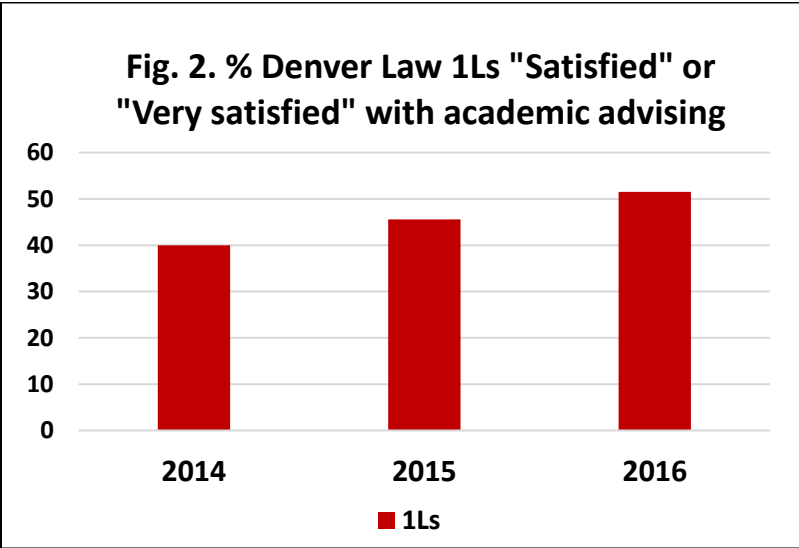
- We have amped up the information environment, through on-line sources (e.g., Pathways) and more advising sessions (e.g., the “So you want to be” series).
- We demonstrated more activity throughout the building.
- We involved more people throughout the building in these efforts.

2. *(This subsection added 7/13/2017)* Results from the 2017 LSSSE survey were made available in July, 2017. The results support the view that our efforts in 2016-17 made a difference:

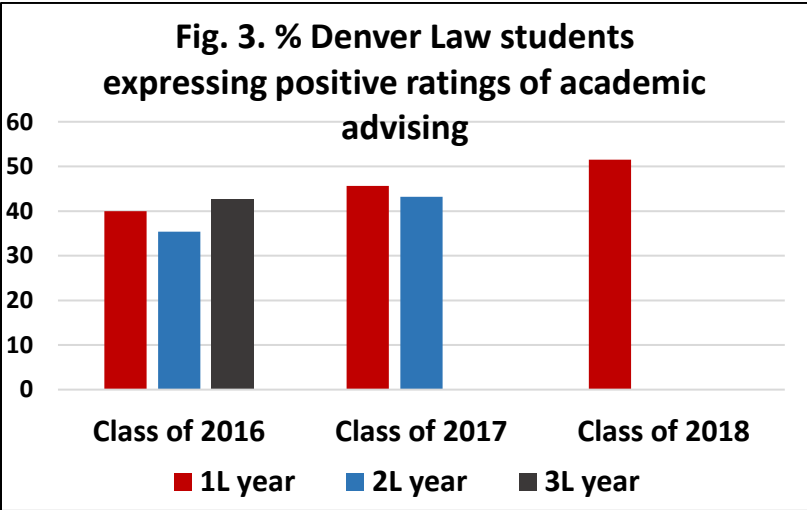
- A higher percentage of 1Ls, 2Ls and 3Ls rated Denver academic advising positively in 2017 than in the three prior years. The increase for 1Ls was sizable, jumping to 76% in 2017, up from 52% (2016), 46% (2015) and 40% (2014). (Figure 4)
- In 2017, positive ratings among Denver Law 1Ls matched positive ratings by 1Ls at all other LSSSE schools. Prior to 2017, 26 to 35% more students at other LSSSE schools expressed positive ratings than was the case at Denver Law. (Figure 5)



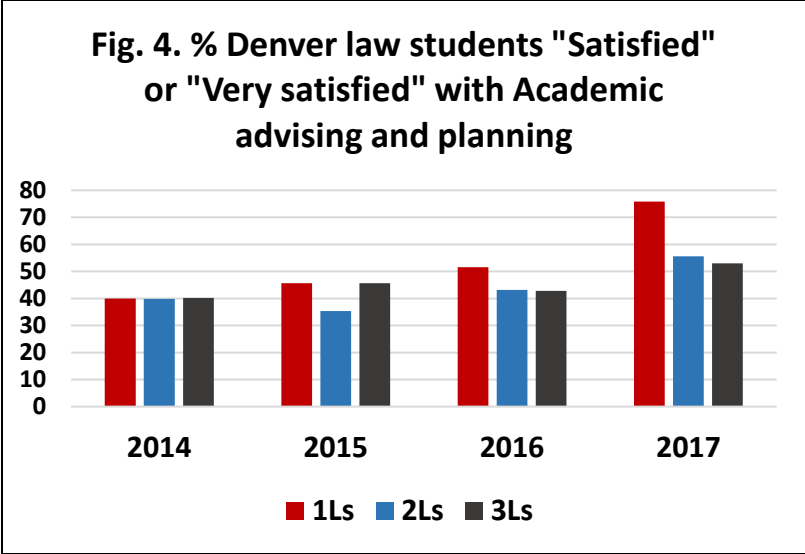
Denver Law 3Ls are less likely than 3L students from other law schools participating in the LSSSE to express satisfaction with academic advising.



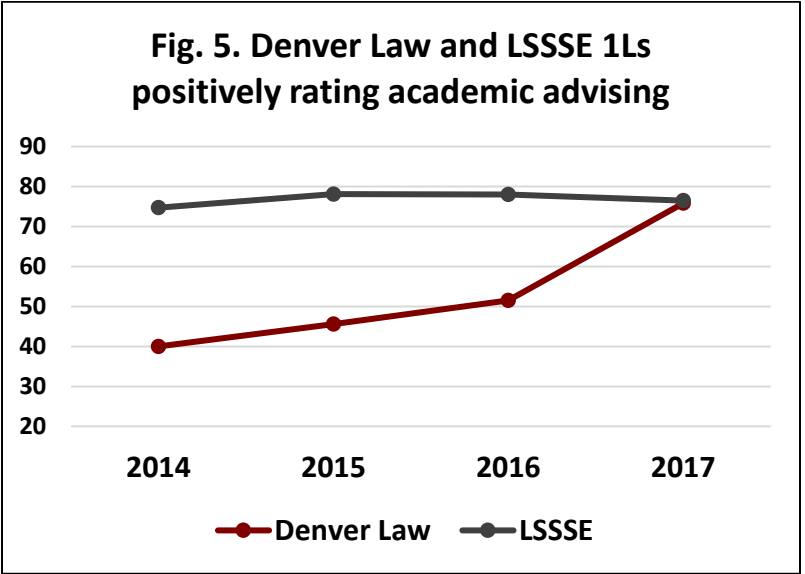
The percentage of Denver Law 1Ls expressing satisfaction with academic advising rose modestly in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016.



More 1Ls from the Class of 2017 expressed satisfaction with academic advising than did 1Ls from the Class of 2016; similarly, more 2Ls in the Class of 2017 expressed satisfaction than had 2Ls in the Class of 2016. Is this evidence for what we might call a "carryover effect?"



A higher percentage of 1Ls, 2Ls and 3Ls rated Denver academic advising positively in 2017 than in the three prior years



In 2014 through 2016, far fewer Denver Law 1Ls expressed satisfaction with academic advising than did 1Ls at the other LSSSE schools. In 2017, that changed: the percentage of Denver Law 1Ls rating academic advising positively matched the percentage among all other LSSSE schools.

Appendix 1

Professional Mentoring Program Practice Area by Demand (Based on Student Applications)*

Business/Corporate Law (Transactional)	177
Business/Corporate Law (Litigation)	151
Environmental & Natural Resource Law	133
Criminal Law (Defense)	123
Criminal Law (Prosecution)	110
Constitutional Law	99
Intellectual Property/Copyright/Patent/Trademark Law	84
Sports/Entertainment/Media Law	84
Civil Litigation (Plaintiff)	71
Marijuana Law	69
Energy (Oil & Gas)	67
Civil Litigation (Defense)	66
Family Law	65
Real Estate Law	64
Other (Please Specify)	63
Immigration & Naturalization Law	58
Securities Law/Mergers & Acquisitions	55
Juvenile/Children Law	47
Other Area (Please Specify)	47
Health/Hospital Law	46
Employment Law	40
Wills/Trusts/Estate Planning Law	37
Appellate Practice	33
Administration Law	29
Education Law	29
Taxation	27
Elder Law	14
Public Utilities/Municipality Law	14
Bankruptcy Law	8
Transportation Law	6

* Source: 1Ls list their area(s) of interest early in the academic year; this data is collected by the Professional Mentoring Program.

Appendix 2

MARCH IS ADVISING MONTH AT DENVER LAW: LINE-UP

- Fri Feb 24 * JD JOURNEY for 1Ls
- Fri Mar 3 Certificate Programs Lunch Session with Faculty Directors
- Wed Mar 8 Annual SCOL Advising Fair – Multiple Tables
- Wed Mar 8 * JD JOURNEY for Evening 1Ls
- Thur March 9 Clinical Program & Legal Externship Joint Info Session
- Mon Mar 13 * So You're Not Sure What kind of Lawyer You Want to Be
* So You Want to Be an IP Lawyer
- Tue Mar 14 * So You Want to Be a an Environmental/Natural Resources Lawyer
*So You Want to Be a Community Development & Local Governance Lawyer
- Wed Mar 15 * So You Want to Be a Criminal Defense Lawyer
* So You Want to Be an Immigration Lawyer
- Mar 19-25 Spring Break
- Mon Mar 27 * So You Want to Be a Marijuana Law Lawyer
* So You Want to Be a Healthcare Lawyer
- Tue Mar 28 * So You Want to Be a Family Law Lawyer
* So You Want to Be a Prosecutor
- Wed Mar 29 * So You Want to Be a Business Lawyer
* So You Want to be a Civil Rights Lawyer
- Thur Mar 30 Legal Externship Program Info Session
Corporate & Commercial Law Program Advising Session (day and evening)
- April 3-8 Fall 2017 & Summer 2017 Registration open

*Events added 2016-17

Appendix 3

MARCH IS ADVISING MONTH: PARTICIPANTS AND ATTENDEES

Date	Event	Lead	Support	Students attending
Wed 2/22, 7-7:30	JD Journey 1LEs	Chris Newman, John McKee, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO	1LE LP class
Fri 2/24, 10:30-11:30	JD Journey 1Ls	Viva Moffat, Eric Bono, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	8
Fri 3/3, Noon-1	Certificate Program Lunch Session	Certificate Program Faculty Directors (6)		30
Wed 3/8, 4-6	Annual Advising Fair	Tabling by all		100
Mon 3/13, 12-12:25	So You're Not Sure What Kind of Lawyer You Want to Be	Viva Moffat, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	4
12:30-12:55	So You Want to Be an IP/Patent Lawyer	Viva Moffat, Randy Wagner	Externship, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	6
Tue 3/14, 12-12:25	So You Want to Be an Environmental/Natural Resources Lawyer	Fred Cheever, Greg Hobbes, Susan Daggett, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	8
12:30-12:55	So You Want to Be a Community Development & Local Governance Lawyer	Fred Cheever, Susan Daggett, Randy Wagner	Externship, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	3
Wed 3/15, 12-12:25	So You Want to Be a Criminal Defense Lawyer	Robin Walker Sterling, Chris Lasch, Randy Wagner	Externship, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	2
12:30-12:55	So You Want to Be an Immigration Lawyer	César García Hernández, Chris Lasch, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	4
Mon 3/27, 12-12:25	So You Want to Be a Marijuana Law Lawyer	Sam Kamin, Randy Wagner	Externship, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	12
12:30-12:55	So You Want to Be a Healthcare Lawyer	Katherine Mulready (grad/practitioner), Univ Coll MS/HCL Director Sheila Davis, Randy Wagner	Externship, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	9
Tue 3/28, 12-12:25	So You Want to Be a Family Law Lawyer	Rebecca Aviel, Kris McDaniel-Miccio, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	9
12:30-12:55	So You Want to Be a Prosecutor	Lexi Freeman, Kris McDaniel-Miccio, Randy Wagner	Externship, Advocacy Center, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	4
Wed 3/29, 12-12:25	So You Want to Be a Business Lawyer	Jay Brown, Randy Wagner	Externship, Clinic, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	21
12:30-12:55	So You Want to Be a Civil Rights Lawyer	Laura Rovner, Alan Chen, Randy Wagner	Externship, CDO, Student Affairs, Registrar	19

