Librarian Advisors for Undeclared Students: Understanding the Advisee Experience

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Many institutional models exist for advising undeclared students, a group often requiring much guidance and support through the advising and discernment process. This research explored the experience of undeclared students with a librarian advisor. Fifteen students were interviewed after they declared a major to understand how they perceived their advising experience and their satisfaction with advising and their advisor. Overall, students reported feeling mostly satisfied with their librarian advisors. Most students would choose a librarian as their advisor again. Although interview data was largely positive, areas for improvement were identified.

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Undeclared students have unique advising needs, having to research multiple course and major offerings while exploring their own aptitudes and interests. They require much advisor guidance and support (Dika et al., 2019; Gordon & Steele, 2015; Leach & Patall, 2016). Gordon and Steele (2015) described several advising models: general advising centers, advising centers for undeclared students, faculty advising, living-learning centers, and academic units developed for undeclared students. Each model attempts to address the specific needs of undeclared students who often have difficulty with the career decision-making process (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014). One model involves library faculty members serving as advisors for undeclared students (Wiley & Williams, 2015; Williams & Wiley, 2015). This qualitative study explores the experience of undeclared students with librarian advisors to determine student perceptions of effectiveness, satisfaction with the advising received, and preference for advisor type. The following question guides this study: how do undeclared students with a librarian as an advisor describe their experiences with, and perceptions of, library faculty as academic advisors?

In this qualitative study, 2 librarian advisors interviewed 15 recently declared students to better understand their experiences, reservations about a librarian advisor, and advisor-type preference. The study's focus on the librarian-as-advisor model makes this a unique contribution to the literature. We identify ways to improve the advising and overall campus experience of undeclared students, ways to better prepare librarian advisors, and the valuable and unique perspective on the librarian-as-advisor model.

Literature Review

Librarians as Advisors

Many scholarly voices inform perspective on librarians serving as academic advisors and highlight the benefits of this model. Sisoian and Hall (1990) described why librarians may be asked to advise undeclared students. The librarian-as-advisor option increases the number of faculty members in the advisor pool, and librarians provide a neutral perspective. Studdard (2000) described one benefit to librarian advisors as "the personal satisfaction of helping individual students make important life decisions" (p. 792). Students benefit because librarians are "educators who are skilled in listening, providing information, and working with students to accomplish their academic goals" (Studdard, 2000, p. 792). Young (2008) used professional standards to compare academic advising and academic librarianship. The two sets of standards overlap in many areas including a focus on fostering intellectual growth, independent thinking, and effective communication. Kelleher and Laidlaw (2009) described a first-year experience advising program and reported that when students needed research assistance later, they were comfortable asking librarians for help. Flatley et al. (2013) discussed how the skills of librarians allow them to access and acquire knowledge about policies and procedures relevant to course selection, registration, and financial aid and to be generally well-informed and integrated into campus.

The advising role requires a skill set like that used by librarians when working with novice

researchers. The skills used in reference interviews are very applicable to advising. Librarians can dialogue with students who cannot always articulate their information needs for research in the same way that undeclared students may not be able to articulate their career aspirations. Librarians are used to asking probing questions to guide students through the process of inquiry, helping them to find information so they can learn more about their research or about a potential major. The discernment process, which involves exploring and learning about one's passions and connecting them to a major or career path, is really a process of inquiry and research—a primary area of expertise for librarians (Wiley & Williams, 2015).

The literature demonstrates why librarians and students might benefit from the librarian-as-advisor model, but no studies explore the undeclared student experience with this model.

Undeclared Advising

Literature includes informative examples of the advising experiences of various types of undeclared students by different types of advisors. Many of these studies use qualitative methods because sample sizes are often small. Little is known about these groups of undecided students, and qualitative methods deliver rich descriptions of their experiences. One study by Carduner et al. (2011) involved interviews with 17 honors students who were undeclared or "exploratory." Like our study, students had declared a major at the point of the interviews, interviews were semistructured, and participant numbers were comparable.

Ellis (2014) also used individual interviews to explore the experiences and perspectives of undecided first-year students, all advised in an advising center. Three major themes emerged including undecided students' expectations for advising, undecidedness during the first year (levels of undecidedness, concerns about being undecided), and experiences with advising. Another larger study that explored undeclared advising in a central advising center involved group interviews with 162 first-year students through story circles. Four themes emerged: advisor communication, advisor accessibility, student desire for a relationship with the advisor, and students' difficulty distinguishing between the role of high school guidance counselors and college academic advisors (Walker et al., 2017).

Workman (2015) interviewed six first-year exploratory students who received guidance in major and career decision-making from academic advisors who were residence hall directors. This study found that the advising "process is shaped by a student's overall developmental capacity" and that student readiness plays an important role (p. 10). Similarly, a study about first-generation undecided students focused on how students transitioned to college and addressed their perceptions of advising, finding that students were unsure of the advisor's role (Glaessgen et al., 2018).

One study that used interviews with advisors rather than students provided a unique perspective on undeclared advising (Cuevas et al., 2015). Faculty advising fellows, who supplement the work of professional advisors by advising first- and second-year students from various majors, shared their perspectives. The training they received, coupled with the experience of advising students from various majors, led to an increase in campus knowledge, preparing them to better advise (Cuevas et al., 2015).

Institutional Background

This study took place at a private, ecumenical Christian university of about 8,700 students in the Southeast. Best known for its music and music business programs, the university offers more than 100 undergraduate majors in traditional liberal arts and professional programs. No central advising center exists; rather, each student is assigned a faculty advisor in their major. Undeclared students are assigned a faculty librarian for advising. At this institution, librarians hold faculty status and have been advising undeclared students, both first-year and transfer students, for about 10 years. They also work closely with first-year students in other respects, supporting their transition to college through library instruction provided in two required, first-semester general education courses and through instructional and research support to students in their majors. Each librarian serves as a liaison to several academic departments and has knowledge about the curriculum and course offerings. Because of this knowledge, they can help students interested in a particular program.

Assessment of Advising

Advising for all students is assessed as part of broader campus efforts, specifically through a Spring Survey conducted annually to assess the

overall student experience. This survey includes seven statements related to advising. Students rate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale (1 = *very dissatisfied,* 2 = *somewhat dissatisfied*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *somewhat satisfied*, 5 = *very satisfied*). In 2020, the spring survey was sent to 49 undeclared students out of 6,305 undergraduates. Seven (14%) of undeclared students responded. Undeclared students reported being more satisfied on all advising-related questions than the general population. For example, responding on the satisfaction level with "the academic advising you have experienced," 83% of undeclared students were somewhat or very satisfied compared to 68% of all other students. None of the seven undeclared students selected "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" on any advising question.

While the Survey offers positive data regarding librarian advising of undeclared students, the response rate was low, and we wanted more data to inform practice. To further assess the experience of these students, we developed and implemented an *Undeclared Student Exit Survey* to be completed by students upon declaration of a major. This survey asks about advisor-advisee communication, advisor knowledge, satisfaction with advisor, and potential program improvements. The exit survey is deployed at the end of each semester by email to previously undeclared students who have declared a major in that semester. In 2019–2020, 6 of 37 students (16%) contacted completed the survey. For the question, "Select the level to which you agree or disagree with the following statements," students rated 14 questions on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*), and the responses were mostly positive. The highest ratings were on these statements:

- My advisor is knowledgeable about course offerings (75% agreed or strongly agreed)
- My advisor is knowledgeable about the general education program (75% agreed or strongly agreed)
- My advisor is prepared for my advising appointments (100% agreed or strongly agreed)
- My advisor considers my interests and talents when helping me choose courses to take (100% agreed or strongly agreed)
- After my advising appointments, I feel that every course in my new schedule has a purpose (100% agreed or strongly agreed)

The items that received the lowest ratings included:

- I would recommend my advisor to a friend (33% disagreed)
- My advisor and I work together as a team (33% disagreed)
- I find academic advising appointments to be a positive experience (33% disagreed)

Method

Interview

Following IRB exempt verification, we invited formerly undeclared students to participate in semistructured interviews, first sending emails to students who declared a major during the 2019–2020 academic year. Of those 39 students, 10 were interviewed during Fall 2020. Another 18 students declared their major in Fall 2020 and were invited to participate then. Of those, five were interviewed during Spring 2021. We invited a total of 57 students and interviewed 15 (26%).

After obtaining consent, interviews were conducted using Zoom. Semistructured interviews are flexible, dynamic, and provide in-depth "face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words" (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 102). An interview guide was developed to ensure key topics were addressed (see Appendix A; Taylor et al., 2015). Each topic began with an open-ended descriptive question, allowing students to talk about meaningful experiences or important items before the interviewer probed for details and descriptions of their experiences and perspectives. Students received a $30 Amazon gift card after the interview.

Zoom transcript files were used and edited manually for clarity by relistening to the interview recording. Once the transcripts were complete, the audio files were deleted, and the transcript files deidentified.

We used Saldaña's (2015) coding strategies for qualitative research to analyze the interviews. Immediately after each interview, we took notes using Saldaña's (2015) approach to preliminary jottings, which are "tentative ideas for codes, topics, and noticeable patterns or themes" (p. 22) observed "*as* you collect and format your data,

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant	Current Year	Level of Undecidedness	Time Spent Undecided
Participant 1	Junior	Seriously	>9 – 12 months
Participant 2	Junior	Developmentally	>12 months
Participant 3	Sophomore	Tentatively	>3 – 6 months
Participant 4	Sophomore	Tentatively	0-3 months
Participant 5	Sophomore	Developmentally	>9 – 12 months
Participant 6	Sophomore	Tentatively	>3 – 6 months
Participant 7	Sophomore	Developmentally	>3 – 6 months
Participant 8	Sophomore	Seriously	>12 months
Participant 9	Sophomore	Tentatively	>3 – 6 months
Participant 10	Sophomore	Developmentally	>12 months
Participant 11	First-year	Tentatively	>3 – 6 months
Participant 12	Sophomore	Developmentally	>12 months
Participant 13	Sophomore	Tentatively	>9 – 12 months
Participant 14	Sophomore	Developmentally	>9 – 12 months
Participant 15	Sophomore	Developmentally	>12 months

not after all the fieldwork has been completed" (p. 21). These preliminary jottings helped develop an initial codebook, in which the descriptive coding method was used. Descriptive coding "summarizes in a word or short phrase—most often a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 102). We coded each interview transcript together, refined the codebook, and revised earlier transcripts to apply the new or revised codes as needed. We used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to organize and code data.

In addition to descriptive coding of the transcripts, we applied attribute coding to capture participant characteristics. Attribute coding facilitates exploration of potential links between participant characteristics and topical themes during the analysis process (Saldaña, 2015). It allowed us to investigate how certain variables impacted the advisee's experience while undeclared.

Four participant characteristics were coded at the time of the interview: current year in school, time spent undecided, special categories (e.g., honors), and level of undecidedness. Gordon (1998) identified seven levels of undecidedness; three were relevant for this study. The first level, "tentatively undecided," includes students who Gordon (1998) described as comfortable being undecided, ready to decide, vocationally mature, and high functioning. These students are not quite ready to commit to a major, but they are comfortable being undecided and do not see any barriers to decision-making (Gordon, 1998). Next are the "developmentally undecided," who progress through the normal developmental tasks of the discernment process. They need broad exploration of self and occupations and may be interested in many areas with the potential to succeed in most. They require more occupational information and support and may respond well to advising and other career planning interventions (Gordon, 1998). The third level was "seriously undecided." These students exhibit excessive anxiety about the decision process, which may lead to prolonged indecision. They have low self-esteem or self-efficacy, difficulty with decision-making, and may look for an authority figure to tell them the "right choice" (Gordon, 1998, pp. 397–398). We categorized each participant by level of undecidedness and in most cases agreed. Disagreements were resolved with further discussion.

Findings

Characteristics of Participants

Twelve student participants were sophomores, two were juniors, and one was a first-year student. Time spent undecided varied. Nine students were undecided for at least nine months; six were undecided for six months or less. The most pertinent characteristic for our analysis was the level of undecidedness. We categorized six students as "tentatively undecided," seven as "developmentally undecided," and two as "seriously undecided" (see Table 1).

Top Descriptive Codes

Nineteen broad (parent) descriptive codes emerged, each with potential for narrower (child and grandchild) codes. The codes covered many aspects of the undeclared experience from advising expectations, to the experience during orientation, to the discernment process (see Appendix B).

Of the 19 parent codes, four are most relevant to this study:

- Librarian advisor
- Advisor preference
- Perception of librarian-as-advisor model
- I wish

Librarian Advisor

Librarian advisor was one of the largest categories of codes in our codebook. The subcodes under this category with the highest number of occurrences were knowledge, communication, and perceived effectiveness.

Knowledge. Librarian knowledge emerged most in the "librarian advisor" descriptive category. This subcode involves the librarian-advisor's general knowledge about campus, registration, the general education program, and specific majors. When students were asked about their advisor's general education program knowledge, the majority responded positively and noted instances where librarian knowledge of the general education requirements was helpful to them, either in progressing toward their degree or using courses to explore potential majors. Participant 13 stated the following:

> I felt like she helped me decide what I wanted to a lot or she gave me even other options I didn't even think about. I think she helped me explore a lot and do more than I thought I could.

Most students recognized that their undeclared advisor serves as a generalist and understood they would have limited expertise regarding specific majors or programs. They were mostly satisfied with this and noted that the advisor referred them elsewhere when specialized expertise was needed. However, some students who already had a strong interest in a particular major wished their undeclared advisor had more knowledge in that area. Participant 12 said, "I thought she had enough knowledge of kind of the general aspects of each College and the majors they offered to help me get a strong footing and whatever direction I wanted to go in." Participant 7 added, "My advisor wouldn't know things about the classes I was thinking about taking and that could be difficult . . . but they also tended to have a more general knowledge of every department."

Communication. The librarian advisor parent code "communication" had the second-highest number of occurrences. This code captured both positive and negative descriptions of communication. Many students were satisfied with the amount and type of communication they had with their advisor, but some wished for more regular outreach. Participant 10 said, "Email was pretty good. Face-to-face was great. And then once COVID hit we had Zoom." Participant 13 agreed, stating, "I emailed her a good amount, but I went into her office a lot in the library, a couple times to figure things out, I feel like that was our biggest way of communicating."

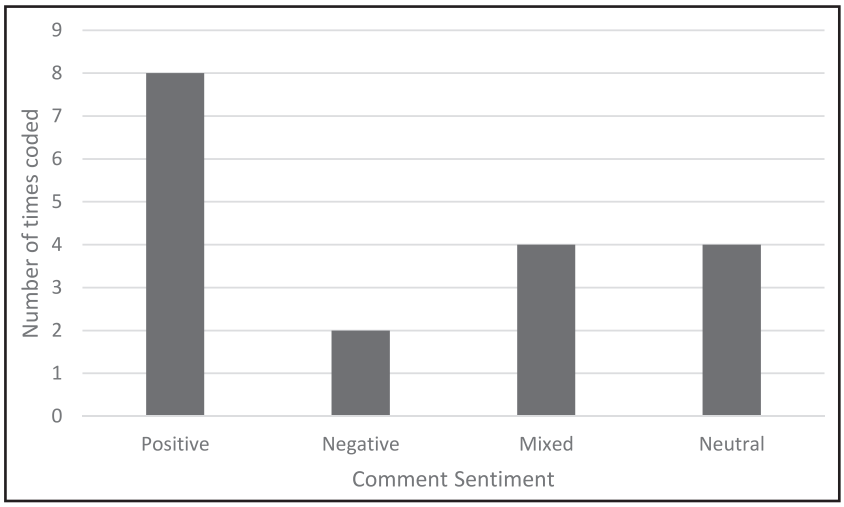
Perceived effectiveness. The third most common subcode under librarian advisor was "perceived effectiveness." This code applied when the student described something the librarian advisor did well or that helped. Many of these comments related to course registration and the effectiveness of the advisor in relaying course requirements and ensuring student progression toward a degree. Several students commented that their advisor exceeded expectations. "Honestly my experience is great . . . my advisor was super on it, she really helped me figure out my schedule and everything. She was very hands on and helped guide me through everything which sort of exceeded my expectations," Participant 13 said. Participant 7 agreed: "My advisor was also very helpful with when I did think that there was something I might want to major in, helping me find the right faculty in that department to talk to. It was a very open environment."

Perception of Librarian-as-Advisor Model

The interview included several questions pertaining to the students' perceptions of the librarian-as-advisor model. The sentiment of responses was coded as positive, negative, mixed, or neutral (see Figure 1). We were especially interested in student responses on this topic.

Most students interviewed had positive or neutral perceptions about the librarian-as-advisor model. "I don't think it really mattered to me as long as . . . the quality of what she was doing and that's, she was great," Participant 2 said.

Figure 1. Perception of Librarian Advisor Model



Participant 4 agreed, "I was kind of like, 'are they going to know what they're talking about' . . . but later I found out that people that work in a library . . . can be like your best friend for literally almost anything."

Most who were neutral did not seem bothered that their advisor was a librarian. Some even commented that they were not even aware at first that their advisor was a librarian. Participant 13 said:

> I first heard about it like that first week or whatever, I was a little bit nervous, I was like "oh no are they going to know like about the school and the scheduling" . . . but after I got to sit and talk with my advisor I was like "okay, this is fine, I think this is great." My nervousness went away.

Some students described having mixed or negative perceptions of the librarian-as-advisor model. Participant 1 said, "I guess it sort of contributes to feeling like you're not particularly valued." And Participant 15 stated, "She was nice and helpful in ways, but then, there were actually many times I didn't feel like it was, you know, helpful toward what I needed." Most negative comments came from students who were "seriously undecided." The level of undecidedness was a fairly accurate predictor of overall satisfaction with the advising experience.

Advisor Preference

To further explore the experience and perception of undeclared students with a librarian advisor, we asked, "If you could choose, would you prefer to have a librarian as an advisor or someone else, a faculty member from a department, or other student support person?" The majority responded a library faculty member, some said a regular faculty member in an area of interest, and a few said they preferred a professional advisor (see Figure 2).

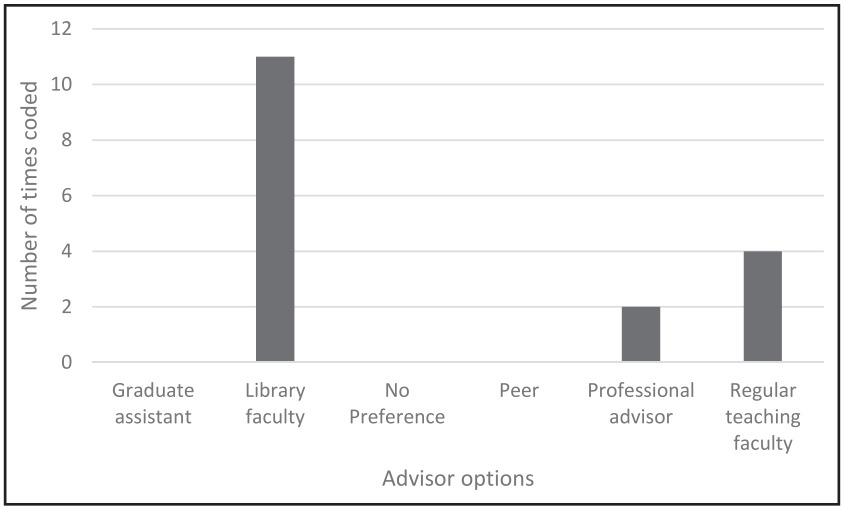
Students' comments explain their selections. "I think the librarians are my ideal because they're unbiased like they're just going to give me the information not trying to like lead me one way," Participant 4 said. Participant 6 agreed: "I would probably do the librarian all over again because it's more of a, they understand a lot of different sides, whereas like a major specific one only understands that side." However, some had different experiences.

"*I wish*"

Throughout the interviews, students would often say something along the lines of "I wish" or "I think it would be good if. . .." The "I wish" codes fell into three main themes: outreach, advisors from an area of interest or multiple advisors, and outside barriers.

Some students expressed a desire for more outreach by advisors or general sessions for undeclared students to learn about different majors and to talk to students from different

Figure 2. Advisor Preference



majors. "I wish there would have been like a little more . . . checking in," Participant 1 said.

Several students wished for an advisor from an area of interest or to have multiple advisors representing different areas. Participant 15 said:

> I would have loved to have multiple advisors, maybe one or three just because I have multiple interests, and I feel like undeclared students, especially that could be really helpful to not just have one, but maybe have a few in different areas.

Participant 7 stated, "I think it would have been nice to have the option to meet with students who majored in different things as an undeclared to talk with them about it."

Others addressed barriers, such as limited course availability or being restricted from taking courses in a certain major. "I kind of wish that like the different majors were more open to you being able to take classes in them," Participant 1 said.

Overall Experience

The final interview question asked students to rate the overall effectiveness of their advising experience on a scale from 1 (*not effective*) to 10 (*very effective*). Five students ranked their experience as high as possible, three were at a nine, two were at an eight, three were at a seven, one was at a six, and one was at a four. Those who rated their experience at a 10 were all developmentally or tentatively undecided. The two seriously undecided students rated their overall experience as a four and seven.

Discussion

Undeclared students generally had a positive perception of librarians as advisors. They felt their librarian advisors had abundant knowledge that was essential to their discernment process and degree progression while undeclared. They also appreciated the unbiased and neutral perspective of librarian advisors. Several students also mentioned the benefit of knowing a librarian to get research help. For these reasons, 73% of the students interviewed would choose a librarian advisor again.

One goal of this study was to improve advising for undeclared students. The interviews revealed areas needing improvement related to communication and community. Communication was a frequently applied code. Students reported many positive examples of communication, but they often wanted more communication between advising appointments. They wanted their advisor to check in regularly and inform them on relevant campus support services and events. Students expressed a desire for deeper connections to their advisor, which could result from improved communication. Advisor communication was typically through email leading up to and during the course registration period (e.g., advising appointment scheduling, registration deadlines). Some students also reported that advising appointments felt rushed and focused heavily on course scheduling.

Students wanted more time to get to know their advisors and for their advisors to get to know them. Also notable, several students recognized that communication works both ways, and that they also bear responsibility for communicating with their advisors, especially by sharing their interests, asking questions, and taking advantage of the offered support. These student-perceived gaps were not surprising; this is an area many advisors have noted for improvement as well.

Similarly, some students expressed a desire for more community. Undeclared students often reported feeling lost without the community that comes with being in a specific major. If they did meet other undeclared students, it was by chance. Some reported that they never met another undeclared student. A few mentioned the one structured event held for undeclared students was held early in the first semester and was too short to forge any connections.

Besides examining descriptive code trends, we looked for potential connections between these and participant codes. This analysis clarified that common themes could inform next steps, but each student had a distinct experience based upon their areas of interest and level of decidedness.

The participant coding category most relevant to our analysis was undecidedness level. Being seriously undecided significantly impacted advisor relationship and connection. The relationship/connection code was used 17 times, but only once in an interview with a participant who was seriously undecided. This aligns with research on student undecidedness or indecision, which finds that the seriously undecided exhibit high anxiety, immaturity, poor self-efficacy, and avoidant behavior—characteristics that advisors may find frustrating and challenging when building relationships (Gordon & Steele, 2015; Guay et al., 2006). Not surprisingly, the perceived effectiveness code—applied when a student expressed a positive experience in their undeclared advising—was cited most often in developmentally or tentatively undecided students. Students with a more positive outlook on their undeclared status and who enjoy the discernment process reported more positive experiences with their advisor.

Lack of community was coded most frequently for participants who were seriously undecided. They lacked connection with both advisors and their peers. Perceived deficiencies in the advisor were applied as codes most often in students who were classified as seriously undecided. This subset of undeclared students saw more areas for improvement in their undeclared experience and with their advisor overall. This lack of connection and belongingness is consistent with research on the experience of undecided students and points to the importance of advisors facilitating these students' connections and belongingness (Leach & Patall, 2016).

The correlation between students' areas of interest and overall experience was also explored. Students whose interests were concentrated in one college or broad discipline expressed the desire for more specialized advising. Having an advisor in their area of interest would have helped them discern between closely related majors and start on required courses.

Next Steps

The results of this study emphasize the value of communication. Undecided students are likely to benefit from regular check ins with advisors who share information about upcoming events, important dates, and campus offices that can help with discernment. Library advisors can partner with other support offices to improve communication, including career services and counseling centers.

Librarian advisors can advocate for making programming and outreach efforts for undeclared students a university priority. Specific programming may be valuable, such as a major exploration week, face-to-face groups, and social media communities.

This study provides librarian advisors many benefits, including insight into how we can better prepare to guide students through the discernment process. Advising undeclared students requires a breadth of knowledge about the institution, curriculum, various majors, and support services. Collaboration between campus offices and resources may result in additional and/or specialized support. And finally, all librarian advisors should be trained to identify certain characteristics—especially a student's decidedness level—to offer additional support.

Limitations

This study has limitations. First, the sample size was small, and students self-selected by responding to the interview request. Although we did obtain a variety of participant profiles and experiences, all perspectives may not have been represented. Another potential limitation is that the librarian advisors conducting student interviews were very

involved in the advising program. As such, there is potential for researcher bias. Although the coding methods used for analysis are intended to limit this, interview participants were not asked to confirm themes identified by the researchers, which is one way that potential bias could be further mitigated. Also, students may not be comfortable sharing their full perspectives with a librarian advisor. However, students were paired with an interviewer other than their advisor to diminish this. Finally, the timing of the interviews, which occurred at different times for different students, could cause inconsistencies. Some students were newly declared, making their experiences easier to recall; for others, a full semester had passed since they were undeclared.

Conclusion

Undeclared students desire knowledgeable, available, communicative advisors and opportunities to connect with other undeclared students. The results of this study highlight that librarian advisors were viewed positively by these undeclared students and met many of their expectations. As such, these findings support the librarian-as-advisor model. As research suggests (Wiley & Williams, 2015) and this study confirms, librarians have a unique set of skills and dispositions because of their training and experience; they are well suited to serve as academic advisors. Academic librarians could take on this role to support the academic missions of their institutions, to contribute to student retention efforts, and to demonstrate their value as faculty members.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

Feel free to reference your specific advisor, names will be deleted and your response will be kept confidential. We want to know both positive and negative, what worked, what could have been better, etc. Just describe the experience so we know what it's like from the other side so we can learn.

Pre-history

- How did you select Belmont?
- How did you decide to be undeclared?
- What had you heard about being undeclared before?
- What was your advising experience like in high school?

Immediate Context

- What is your current major?
- How long have you been in that major?
- How do you feel about your current major at this time?

Grand-tour question

- Can you tell me about your advising experience, from the first time you were advised during summer orientation to when you finally declared a major?

On Being Undeclared

- How did you feel about being undeclared when you first arrived at Belmont?
- What were your expectations for advising?
- What did you hear from others about being undeclared?
- How did you feel about having a library faculty member for an advisor?

Discernment Process

- How did you learn about the majors at Belmont?
- Describe the majors you considered.
- Do you feel you were able to explore majors that you were interested in?
- How did your advisor guide you through the discernment process?
- Were there others that guided you through the discernment process?

Advising Sessions

- How were you able to communicate with your advisor?
- What occurred during the sessions with your advisors?
- Do you feel that you had enough interaction with your advisor?

Librarian as Advisor

- Do you feel that your advisor was prepared to help you select classes that helped you to make progress towards a degree and that helped you explore various majors?
- Do you feel that your advisor, as a librarian, had knowledge of the BELL Core and of majors in order to best advise you?
- If you could choose, would you prefer to have a librarian as an advisor or someone else, a faculty member from a department, or other student support person?

Wrap-Up

- What would be your advice to other students entering as undeclared as it pertains to the advising and discernment process?
- How would you rate the overall effectiveness of your advising experience (on a scale of 1–10)?
- Discuss your thoughts on the advising process as a whole.

Appendix B. Codebook

Parent codes	Child codes	Grandchild codes	Code description
Perception of being undeclared			Thoughts on themselves or others' thoughts shared with the advisee on being undeclared; comfort level; stigma of being undeclared
	Positive		
	Negative		
	Mixed		
	Neutral		
Advising expectations			Expectations of the advising process
	Advisor		Expectations of the advisor
	Institution		Expectations of the institution
	Other		Expectations apart from the advisor or institution (e.g., course availability)
Towering Traditions			Initial experience as an undeclared student through summer orientation and welcome week
	Positive		
	Negative		
	Mixed		
	Neutral		
High school advising experience			Mention or description of advising during high school
	Positive		
	Negative		
	Mixed		
	Neutral		
College selection			Description of college selection process
	Specific program/ major		Selection based on one or more specific programs offered
	Other		Selection based on a specific reason other than a program or major (e.g., scholarship, Christian environment, family connection, geographic location)
Community			Community as an undeclared student
	Undeclared peers		Other undeclared students they know
	Making friends/social life		Making friends and their social aspects of being an undeclared student
	Lack of community		Desire for more community or connection throughout their undeclared experience
Librarian advisor			Comments about or description of the specific advisor (not the librarian as advisor model)

Appendix B. Codebook (cont.)

Parent codes	Child codes	Grandchild codes	Code description
	Knowledge		Librarian advisor knowledge
	Knowledge	BELL Core	BELL Core knowledge
	Knowledge	Specific majors	Knowledge about various majors
	Relationship/connection		Relationship with advisor, mentoring, or lack of connection indicated
	Communication		How/when/how often/satisfaction level with communication
	Perceived deficiencies		Issues or unsatisfactory experience with advisor
	Perceived effectiveness		Positive experience with advisor
	Library skills/research support		Interactions with advisor apart from advising, in their role as librarian
Discernment process			Exploring and discerning majors as an undeclared student
	Campus resources		GPS, career services, or other campus resources related to discernment of a major
	Key influences		Peers, faculty, librarian, campus support, courses, etc., that had a major impact on their discernment process
	Key influences	Professor	Specific mention of a professor who influenced during the student's discernment process
	Exploring majors		Student description of how they were or were not able to explore potential majors; options for majors at Belmont
	Exploring majors	Courses	Major exploration through taking a course
	Exploring majors	Self-directed	Student is the driving force in discernment. Activities could include reading the catalog, course descriptions, reaching out to departments, etc.
	Exploring majors	Barriers	Challenges or barrier to exploring a major
	Exploring majors	Other	Exploring majors apart from courses, self-directed research, and description of barrier to exploration (e.g., talking to someone in a major)
	Lack of support		Feeling on their own during the discernment process
	Program elimination		Gaining clarity on what they do not want to pursue as part of discernment

Appendix B. Codebook (cont.)

Parent codes	Child codes	Grandchild codes	Code description
Course selection process			Selecting courses before registration each semester
Course registration process			Course registration process during a regular semester, outside of summer orientation
Majors considered			Mention of majors considered while undeclared
	Disparate areas		Areas in different colleges, or significantly different majors within a college
	Concentrated area		Areas in the same college or closely related disciplines
Declaring a major			Technical aspects or process of declaring a major
Program requirement barrier			Student is undeclared due to a program requirement (e.g., audition, test score); or describes plan to meet specific program requirements
Satisfaction with current major			Level of satisfaction with or confidence in their declared major
	Not satisfied		
	Somewhat satisfied		
	Somewhat unsatisfied		
	Very satisfied		
Perception of librarian-as-advisor model			Comments on the advising model, not the individual advisor
	Positive		
	Negative		
	Mixed		
	Neutral		
Degree progression			Need or concern for classes counting toward their degree
"I wish. . ."			Students express what they would have liked to see or experience as an undeclared student
Advisor preference			Preference for the category of advisor they would have liked to have while undeclared
	Professional advisor (full-time nonfaculty advisor)		
	Peer (undergraduate student)		
	Graduate assistant		
	Regular teaching faculty		
	Library faculty		
	No preference		

Appendix B. Codebook (cont.)

Parent codes	Child codes	Grandchild codes	Code description
Advice			Advice for future undeclared students
	Explore catalog		
	Talk to majors (faculty and students)		
	Mindset		Comments on mindset while undeclared (e.g., keep an open mind, embrace the process)
	Timing		Comments related to time spent undeclared (e.g., take time to make this decision)
	Degree progression		Comments related to degree progression (e.g., suggest completing BELL Core as soon as possible)
	Advisor relationship and/or communication		How to best work with an undeclared advisor