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## **Does Sustained, Intensive College Advising That Taps the Strengths of Both People and Technology Help Students Graduate?**

*New research study by CCRC and MDRC will evaluate the effect of technology-mediated advising using the most rigorous research methods*

**New York, January 18, 2017** — Three institutions of higher education have been chosen to participate in a research project to test whether a comprehensive advising overhaul supported by technologies such as early alert systems and education planning tools has a measurable impact on the success of students.

The study of technology-mediated advising at Montgomery County Community College in Pennsylvania, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and California State University, Fresno, will use the most rigorous research methods to test the impact of the new approach on students. It will be conducted by the [Community College Research Center](#) (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University, and [MDRC](#), an independent research organization.

“Most studies of advising reform examine only a single piece of the student support puzzle, examine the impact of technology in the absence of other changes, or are unable to disentangle the impact of advising from other completion-oriented reforms. This study will help us understand the impact of sustained, personalized, and multifaceted support for students, delivered by a combination of technology and people, in a real-world reform environment,” said CCRC’s assistant director and study principal investigator Melinda Mechur Karp.

Before looking at student outcomes, the researchers will help the colleges implement high-quality versions of the advising reforms, known as iPASS, or Integrated Planning and Advising for Student Success. The reforms will be based on CCRC research that suggests technological tools cannot transform

advising without changes that allow advisors to interact with students in a deeper, more personalized way over the course of their college careers.

The study, which starts in January, will use randomized controlled trials—in which students are assigned via lottery to the new program—to compare students at each institution who have access to advising technologies alone with students who have access to the technologies coupled with intrusive, sustained, and holistic advising and support. The researchers will look at the extent to which high-quality, technology-supported college advising helps students stay in school and make greater progress towards graduation. They will also refine tools to help colleges implement and measure the reforms.

The need for information about how to best leverage iPASS technologies is clear. Colleges want to know “how to do” iPASS but do not know what high-quality iPASS reforms look like. Despite the absence of model programs, institutions are moving forward, often by deploying technology without reforming advising as a whole.

“This is a great opportunity to partner with these institutions and provide rigorous, timely evidence about the effectiveness of their reforms,” said Alex Mayer, the lead researcher at MDRC. “We’re excited to be part of this initiative and to contribute to this growing area of innovation in higher education.”

The randomized controlled trials at the three colleges supplement a larger study of 26 colleges implementing technology-mediated advising reform, which will examine implementation of the full iPASS approach and provide evidence of the approach’s influence on key measures of student success.

The study is funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#).

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The **Community College Research Center** (CCRC), Teachers College, Columbia University, conducts research on the major issues affecting community colleges in the United States and contributes to the development of practice and policy that expands access to higher education and promotes success for all students.

Headquartered in New York City and Oakland, CA, **MDRC** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization with more than 40 years of experience designing and evaluating education and social policy initiatives.