



# How Coaching Fits with Other Student Support Roles

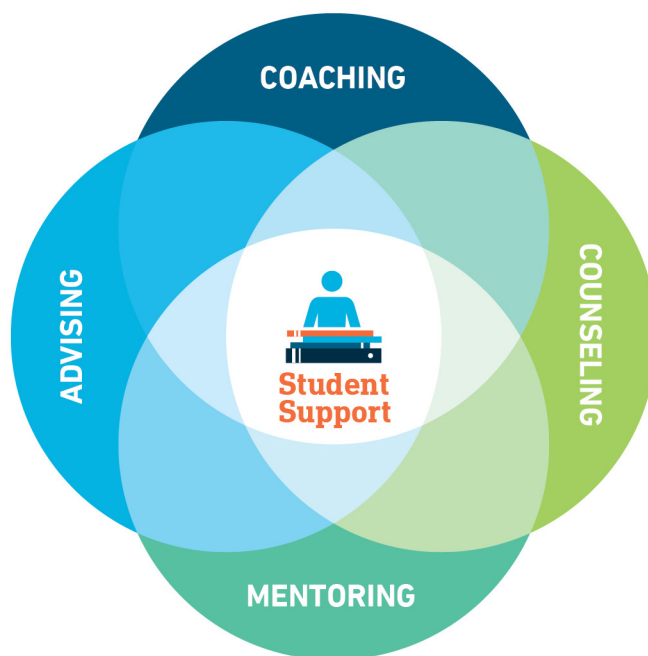
## Coaching, advising, counseling and mentoring all differ — yet can effectively work together to enhance student support

Student support roles at colleges and universities take many different forms. Admissions staff, mental health counselors and mentors, to name a few. Each important on their own. And each even more effective when paired with one-on-one, direct student coaching from InsideTrack. Our research-proven coaching methodology adds an important layer to any student support suite, creating a roadmap for improved student success.

### Understanding student support roles

What's the difference between advising and coaching? How can counseling and coaching complement one another in order to best help students? And what role does a mentor play in conjunction with a rigorously trained student success coach?

As a way to provide a better understanding of what coaching is and how it works, we compare and contrast three common student success roles to the role of student success coaches, exploring the similarities and differences between each. Providing role clarity — and showing how the different roles can work together — can lead to greater retention, persistence and completion for all students.





# Advising and Coaching:

Knowing the differences creates a collaborative road to success

Advising and coaching are both critical student support roles that work toward a similar goal – to have a positive impact on the student experience and contribute to student persistence and retention rates.

## What is advising?

Advisors are the go-to experts in policy, procedure, campus resources and degree requirements. Their focus is often on a specific academic need and ensuring the student has a plan for meeting that need (such as assistance with registration, a degree plan, resources for academic support). Sometimes that plan is co-created with the student using a developmental advising approach, while other times the advisor will direct students toward resources or recommend specific next steps using a more directive advising approach. Academic advisors are adept at working with students to select programs that lead to a chosen career path, and they typically work only within the academic sphere.

## What is coaching?

Coaching moves beyond the realm of academics, creating a collaborative, individually tailored approach to address each student's needs. Coaching typically takes a proactive approach to both short- and long-term success and can be implemented separately from or, ideally, alongside advising services. InsideTrack coaching is further distinguished by our research-proven methodology designed to include holistic assessment of potential risk factors and development of specific cognitive and noncognitive skills to help students overcome barriers. Coaching carefully balances meeting the immediate needs of students and nurturing long-term personal growth and development. This process helps students build skills that will serve them well each day, overcome bumps in the road and successfully achieve their goals.



## One scenario, two approaches

Let's say an upset student reaches out because they got a bill they weren't expecting. How might an advisor and coach differ in communicating with the student?

**The advisor** may explain information about fees and will ask about the student's funding sources. The advisor also helps identify which departments might be involved, then refers the student to the financial aid office, veteran's benefit office and/or the bursar's office, as applicable.

**The coach** may help the student articulate their concern by asking a series of open-ended questions. The coach will help the student create questions for each department to help them get the answers they're looking for, while building confidence. The coach will also ensure the student commits to a plan for connecting with the appropriate department and schedules a follow-up coaching session to check in on their progress.

## Co-existing and collaborating for the win

Advisors and coaches both play a critical role in higher education, and the work they do with students should be seen as symbiotic. In fact, the best scenario for student success is when coaching and advising complement one another.



# Counseling and Coaching:

Both make student well-being their priority, but support it in different ways

Professionals in both roles address issues affecting student wellness, support students' growth and development, and help students as they work toward their desired personal, academic and career goals.

## What is counseling?

For this higher ed comparison, we are focusing on institution licensed mental health counselors. Campus mental health counseling centers typically offer services such as assessment and diagnosis of mental health disorders, treatment for anxiety and depression, therapy sessions and prevention programs. As a growing number of students struggle with anxiety, depression, uncertainty, and any number of life stressors, they have been increasingly seeking out mental health counseling for assistance.

**InsideTrack coaches can offer support through their Crisis Support Services (CSS) team when situations escalate beyond the normal parameters of coaching services — such as food insecurity, family trauma, or suicidal ideation. This adds another level of support for students needing emergency support.**

## What is coaching?

Student success coaching refers to a proactive, collaborative relationship in which a coach works one-on-one with a student to facilitate improvement in areas such as time management and goal setting, addressing any barriers the student faces to their short- and long-term success. Coaches view each student holistically and balance meeting their immediate needs with helping them problem-solve — making sure students know how to find and use various institutional resources.

Coaching sessions may touch on personal aspects of a student's life, especially those that are impeding the student's overall well-being and ability to succeed. But coaches will not delve deeply into mental health issues or act as a counseling substitute. In fact, coaches are specifically trained when to suggest counseling services and have a list of appropriate resources to share.

## One scenario, two approaches

Let's say a student is having issues focusing on their school work and their recent grades have begun to suffer. The student shares that they're having problems at home. How might counseling and coaching differ in communicating with the student?

**The counselor** would spend time exploring the student's emotional state and the reasons for the problems at home. Using licensed training, empathy and relational skills, the counselor might ask the student about what happened and are they upset about a specific incident or conversation. The counselor tries to understand the student and share insight into what is causing the problems.

**The coach** focuses on creating concrete steps to get the student back on track. The coach might have the student brainstorm ideas for raising their grades — things like working with a tutor, asking the professors for help, seeing if there are options for re-doing subpar work or available extra credit opportunities. If the student shared that their issue goes beyond typical family dynamics and includes anxiety or depression, the coach could refer them to a counseling center or collaborate with them on a plan to get professional help.

## A powerful team

The work of counselors and coaches is highly complementary and not interchangeable. Students who are struggling with mental health and academic challenges can benefit from working with both coaches and counselors.







# Mentoring and Coaching:

How they differ — and how they both encourage student participation for ultimate success

Mentoring and student success coaching share an overarching objective to help individual students grow and develop, achieve their desired goals, and reach their full potential.

## What is mentoring?

Mentors offer advice drawn from their own lives and serve more of a teaching function, with their “training” coming from personal and work experiences. They’re often volunteers, serving as mentors in addition to their schooling or work. Mentors are usually chosen for their specific experience – their position in a particular job or field – and may be able to introduce the student mentee to people of influence within an industry or organization. Many students view their mentors as role models who can help guide them along a particular career path.

## What is coaching?

Coaching is also based on trust building and personal connection, though it tends to be more formal and structured than mentoring. InsiderTrack coaching follows research-proven methodology that includes holistic assessment of potential risk factors and development of specific cognitive and noncognitive skills to help students overcome barriers to short- and long-term success. Coaching is proactive, creating a collaborative, individually tailored approach to each student’s needs. Coaches nurture long-term personal growth and development through small, meaningful changes and the integration of new strategies, habits and mindsets into learners’ lives.

## One scenario, two approaches

Let’s say a student is leaning towards engineering as their major. They’re thinking about becoming a civil engineer, but they want to explore other engineering paths and related careers that could require a different degree.

**The mentor** starts by getting to know the student and building a personal connection. The mentor might be a student in the college’s engineering program or an alumni who works as a civil engineer. The information they provide is informal and based on their own experience. The mentor provides advice to the student and tells them what they should do, based on conversations the mentor and student have had about the student’s personal hopes, challenges and goals for their degree.

**The coach** starts with a holistic assessment, asking the student a variety of questions to get to the heart of their goals in pursuing an engineering-related degree. In doing so, the coach learns that the student had difficulties with algebra in high school and is now struggling with their first college calculus course, which is a prerequisite to their engineering degree. Working together, the coach and student make a plan for accessing tutoring for additional math help. And over the course of multiple sessions, they create a roadmap that will help the student determine the best engineering pathway for them based on their core values and career aspirations.

## Better together

Mentors and coaches both play a positive, supportive role. In their own way, each one helps students build skills they will use every day while working to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. The work of mentors and coaches is complementary and should be regarded that way.



## Strong alone, stronger together

On their own, advising, coaching, counseling and mentoring are each crucial resources in the student support toolbox. Adding coaching to the mix with existing institutional services creates a collaborative process that integrates with and furthers your efforts — whether that's enrollment, retention, re-enrollment or career support. Providing one-on-one direct student coaching also gives students the sense that they have a team supporting them to completion.

And through capacity building and training for student support staff, InsideTrack can help you develop your own on-site coaching program and help you integrate coaching methodology into the important work you're already doing. Our specialized coach trainers provide in-depth and ongoing training using our evidence-based, research-proven coaching methodology, allowing you to create scalable, sustainable impact for years to come.

The bottom line is creating the ideal partnership to address student challenges, support institutional goals and improve the overall student experience. Together, we can make that happen.



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