Project Title. Strengthening Advising, Strengthening Results ("START")
Absolute Priority 2. The START project will expand upon strong evidence in six studies in the WWC Practice Guide *Effective Advising for Postsecondary Students* (standards version 4). The START project implements Recommendation 2: "Transform advising to focus on the development of sustained, personalized relationships with individual students throughout their college career." The six studies assessed the success in multiple outcome domains, including retention and completion, of underserved students receiving sustained and personalized advising. The student populations and settings in the studies overlap with those of CSU, Fresno. The sample consists of 8,500 students.
Competitive Preference Priority. The START project uses data to continually assess and improve its effectiveness to support the success of underserved students and will sustain that data-driven continuous improvement through the development of permanent resources during the duration of the grant period. Institutional leadership will respond to formative and summative evaluation of the START project, especially to support student success at all stages.
Goal. The goal is to develop and deliver an enhanced advising project for California State University, Fresno, a large, four-year public university. The advising delivers evidence-based practices from the six studies providing evidence meeting WWC Clearinghouse standards without reservation. The project itself will produce WWC Tier 1: Strong Evidence to stimulate and enable replication among the 22 other campuses in the CSU system and peer institutions. Technology enhancements will be developed to improve the enhanced advising.
Expected Outcomes. The main outcomes are increased rates in--

- First-Year Credit Accumulation
- College-level English and Math Course Completion
- Program of Study Selection
- Annual retention and persistence
- Success rates for six-year graduation (freshmen) and three-year graduation (transfer-ins)
- Time to Credential (four-year graduation for freshmen and two-year graduation for transfer students).
- Number of Credentials (bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees)

The outcomes will measure increases for--

- All students (disaggregated by full-time and part-time)
- Underrepresented minority students (URM) (disaggregated by ethnicity and race)
- Low-income students (defined as PELL grant eligible)
- First generation students

The expected outcomes range from 5% - 15% increases depending on the group (e.g., all Treatment students versus low-income Treatment students), with the specific measures, per outcome, provided in detailed tables.
Contributions to Research, Policy, and Practice. The project will contribute to strong evidence for the effectiveness of an enhanced advising project to increase student success at a large, four-year public university. Evidence will be assessed for these five WWC eligible outcomes:

1. Course Performance
2. Progressing in Developmental Education
3. Progressing in College
4. Academic Disposition
5. College Degree Attainment.

An independent evaluator will conduct an evaluation that meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards *without* reservations (specifically, a Randomized Controlled Trial).
Populations to be served. In Fall 2022, CSU, Fresno enrolled 23,929 students, of whom 21,279 are undergraduates. Of these 12,135 (57%) are low-income and 13,799 (64.8%) are first-generation students. The three large student populations are Hispanic, 13,641 (57%); White, 4,029 (16.8%); and Asian, 2,902 (12.1%). The START project will deliver the treatment to entering freshmen (fall 2024) and entering transfer students (fall 2024 and fall 2025), who have been randomly selected by the independent evaluator.
Primary Activities. The university will develop and deliver an enhanced advising project for both freshmen and for transfer students. New and existing advisors will participate in professional development to learn evidence-based practices to deliver sustained, intensive, frequent, and personalized advising at a large public university. These advisors will be supported by technology enhancements, including a central data management system with specialized "add-ins" for them as well as alternate dashboards developed by the institutional research office. The advisors will also be given manageable caseloads to be able to deliver genuinely sustained and personalized advising.
Subrecipient Activities: N/A
Research Application Questions:

1. **Conceptual Background**. Six studies meeting What Works Clearinghouse Tier 1: Strong Evidence standards have confirmed the effectiveness of transformed and transformative advising in achieving postsecondary education academic outcomes, especially retention and timely graduation. This project will provide additional insight regarding the impact of enhanced advising at four-year institutions since the majority of the existing literature has focused on community college settings.
2. **Research issues, hypotheses, or questions**. The START advising project evaluation will assess the effectiveness of START advising and provide information to facilitate replication at other CSU campuses and peer universities. For each of the four years of the intervention, the evaluation team will identify the impact of START enhanced advising on students' course performance (GPA), credits earned, credits earned within students' program of study, completion of college-level English and math courses, retention (fall to spring and fall to fall), degree attainment, and academic motivation and engagement. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness for the university's two main student populations: freshmen and transfer students.
3. **Study Design.** The START advising project evaluation will use a randomized control trial designed to meet What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations. Students who enter as freshmen in fall 2024, and students who enter as transfer students in fall 2024 and fall 2026, will be randomly assigned to a START advisor or regular advisor. Approximately 8,500 students will participate in the study, and half will be assigned to an advisor who received enhanced advising training and the other half will be assigned to a business-as-usual advisor. Students will be randomly assigned within their specific college at CSU, Fresno. We will use a multilevel regression model to estimate the impact of the advising intervention, accounting for the blocked natured of the random assignment, and determine how START effects vary for specific student groups (i.e. URM, low-income, first-generation, and part-time students) compared to their peers who received business-as-usual advising.