

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

The Impact of Advising Skills Upon the Effectiveness of the Departmental Academic Advising Center

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In an era of declining student enrollment and budgeting cutbacks, university administrators have discovered the central role of academic advising in attracting new students and keeping present students from dropping out. Academic advising has been found to be the student service most frequently used by students.¹ Students have vocalized their disillusion with the quality and quantity of student-faculty contact. Efforts to correct this situation are being channeled into the advising process. Delivering assistance to students in solving educational and vocational problems has been seen as an advising component.² Advising is philosophically viewed as a high priority in educational communities. However, when balanced against teaching, research and outreach work, advising is given minimum recognition and reward.³

Most universities and colleges utilize a faculty advising system to accomplish the administrative aspects of advising and to improve the quality of faculty-student relationships.⁴ However, in most circumstances, despite the best intentions, advising is

¹American College Testing Program: *The Institutional Self-Study Service Manual. Part II: Using the Research Results*. (Iowa City, Iowa: Author. 1970); D. P. Hoyt, *An Evaluation of Student Personnel Services at Kansas State University*. Research Report No. 16 (Manhattan, Kansas: Kansas State University, Office of Educational Research, 1971); G. Carney and A. Barak, "A Survey of Student Needs and Student Personnel Services," *Journal of College Personnel*, 17 (1976), 280-284.

²Kathleen C. Christensen and Thomas M. Magoon, "Perceived Hierarchy of Help-giving Sources for Two Categories of Student Problems," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 21 (1974), 311-314.

³J. H. Borgard, P. A. Hornbuckle, and J. Mahoney, "Faculty Perceptions of Academic Advising," *Journal of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators*, 14 (1977), 4-10; Donald J. Mash, "Advising Too Often Taken for Granted," *The College Board Review*, 107 (1978), 33-36; John H. Russell and Thomas Sullivan, "Student Acquisition of Career Decision-making Skills as a Result of Faculty Advisor Intervention," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 20 (1979), 291-296.

⁴K. Moore, "Faculty Advising: Panacea or Placebo?" *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 17 (1976), 371-375.

often reduced to a mere clerical task.' Advising is often viewed on the periphery of teaching by both faculty⁶ and students.' They seldom see advising as going beyond academic clerical assistance.⁸ Faculty are saddled with heavy advising loads, which results in inadequate advising.⁹ The faculty learn to take the "line of least resistance" by waiting for the student to come to them¹⁰ and keeping minimally informed on advising matters." This has led to a situation where academic and career advising has been minimal and ineffective." This leads the student to improper planning, frustration, and wasted time and potential." It is not surprising that almost every recent study of undergraduate education has cited the poor quality of academic advising as a major problem."

The Potential of Advising

If academic advising has not lived up to its potential, it is incumbent upon the university system to explore this untapped resource. Increasing numbers of educators, administrators, and researchers are emphasizing a more developmental

⁶Edmond Hallberg, "Realism in Academic Advising," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 6 (1964), 114-117; Donald A. Biggs, Jane Selon Brodie, and William J. Barnhart, "The Dynamics of Undergraduate Academic Advising," *Research in Higher Education*, 3 (1975), 345-357; Mash, see footnote 3; E. Michael Walsh, "Revitalizing Academic Advisement," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 58 (1979), 446-449.

⁸Burns B. Crookston, "A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 13 (1972), 12-17.

⁹K. Moore. 371-375

¹⁰Biggs et al, see footnote 5; Borgard, see footnote 3

¹¹Hallbert, see footnote 5; J. Mahoney, J.H. Borgard, and P.A. Hornbuckle, "The Relationship of Faculty Experience and Advisee Load to Perception of Academic Advising," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 19 (1978), 28-32.

¹²Crookston, (1972). 12-17; K. Moore. see footnote 4

¹³N. Kiell, *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 35 (1957), 361-364; J. P. Cummer, "A Study of Counselee Satisfaction in Relation to the Interest Level of Faculty Advisers in Counseling Activities," Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Florida State University, 1961; James R. Jose, "Let's Talk About Keeping Those Students We Already Have," *Liberal Education*, 60 (1974), 506-513.

¹⁴E. Ginzberg, *Career Guidance: Who Needs It, Who Provides It and Who Can Improve It*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971); J. L. Grace, *Academic Freedom vs. Student Rights*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern Association of College Deans and Advisors, Washington, D.C., January 1974; K. Moore. see footnote 4. J. P. Bevilacqua, "The Changing Relationship Between the University and the Student: Implications for the Classroom and Student Personnel Work," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 17 (1976), 489-494.

¹⁵R. C. Reardon, "The Counselor and Career Information Service?," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 14 (1973), 495-500.

¹⁶J. Johnson and K. Sprandel, "Centralized Academic Advising at the Department Level: A Model," *University College Quarterly*, 21 (1975), 16-20

approach to academic advising.¹⁵ Developmental advising concerns itself with not only the academic world of the student's development but also the career, emotional, interpersonal, and environmental aspects of the student's world in the context of his development across the life span.¹⁶

Through integrating and synthesizing the multidimensional aspects of the student's development, developmental advising facilitates the student's exploration of the relationship between his personal and progressional life goals.¹⁷ During the years in college, students frequently fail to look beyond the security provided by the university setting. Academic advisors must assist the student in looking beyond his college career, thus, creating an awareness of his goals after graduation.¹⁸ Advisors, by aiding students in forming realistic career expectations, can cushion the impact of the transition from the well-defined role of student to the more amorphous role of the professional.

The advisor and the student must enter into a developmental relationship together in which each differentially engages in a series of developmental tasks, the successful completion of which rest on the learning of both parties.¹⁹ This is difficult because the developmental needs and tasks of a student are often quite different from those of a faculty member.²⁰ The nature of the relationship between advisor and student is of paramount importance.²¹ The advisor must be willing to become a learner and to identify the need to change himself if the situation demands.²² He should have the academic knowledge to translate school policy, rules, and regulations to the students but should admit when they don't have an answer and attempt to obtain informa-

¹⁵A. R. Ivey and W. H. Mnrrill. "Career Process: A New Concept for Vocational Behavior," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 46 (1968). 644-649; Burns B. Crookston, "an Organizational Model for Student Development." Paper presented at fall conference, Northwest College Personnel Association, Gearhart, Oregon, October 1970; Thomas J. Grites, "Student Development Through Academic Advising: A 4 x 4 Model." *NASPA Journal*, 14 (1977), 33-37; Mash, see footnote 3; Walsh, see footnote 5; Crookston (1972), see footnote 6.

¹⁶Crookston (1970), see footnote 15; Crookston (1972), see 6; Reardon, see footnote 13; Grites, see footnote 15; Walsh, see footnote 5.

¹⁷ACT Program, see footnote 1; M. D. Hardee. "Faculty Advising in Colleges and Universities," *Student Personnel Series*, 9 (Washington, D.C.: American College Personnel Association, 1970); Walsh, see footnote 5.

¹⁸Walsh, see footnote 5.

¹⁹Crookston (1972). see footnote 6

²⁰J.L. Bess. "Integrating Faculty and Student Life Cycler," *Review of Educational Research*, 43 (1973), 377-403.

²¹Crookston (1972), see footnote 6; C. G. Morehead and J. C. Johnson, *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 43 (1964). 139-144.

²²Crookston (1970), see footnote 15; Hardee, see footnote 17

tion.²³ The advisor should try to make himself available to his students."²⁴ The advisor should possess the interpersonal skills to demonstrate concern for his students, sensitivity to their problems, and the ability to formulate a caring and trusting relationship."²⁵ The advisor assumes the advisor-student relationships.²⁶

The Centralized Academic Advising Center at the Department Level

Walsh²⁷ hypothesized the utility of a centralized advising center as a means to overcome these barriers. Using a model similar to that of Johnson and Sprandel,²⁸ the Family and Child Development Advising Center at Kansas State University was created to centralize all advising functions into one operation. Staffed by a full-time faculty member with training in both the academic discipline of the department and in student personnel work, a graduate assistant, and several peer advisors, the Center serves the undergraduate population of the department. Utilizing a framework of developmental advising the Advising Center extends itself into the larger area of career counseling. In addition, the staff seeks also to explore the more personal aspects of the student's academic program and vocational decisions. Once a student defines a career goal, efforts are taken to help him/her pursue this goal through suggested coursework, professional involvement in various organizations, the gaining of "hands-on" experience, and the planning of vocational choices after graduation. In addition, following the model presented by Grites,²⁹ various workshops are provided for students, including preview workshops to perspective students, new-student orientations, a senior seminar, and a career seminar for graduating seniors. The previous is a brief overview of the Departmental Advising Center Model in Family and Child Development at Kansas State. A more detailed description of the model and its justification is presented in Polson and Jurich.³⁰

²²Jose, see footnote 11; C. C. Parker, L. R. Good, and William H. Vermillion, Jr., "Perceived Value of Teacher Characteristics," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 43 (1976). 678.

²³Parker, see footnote 23; Borgard et. al., see footnote 3; E. E. Pascarella and P. T. Terenzini, "Patterns of Student-faculty Informal Interaction Beyond the Classroom and Voluntary Freshman Attrition," R. J. Silverman ed. *Journal of Higher Education*, 48 (1977).

²⁴R. F. Bales, *Interaction Process Analysis* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley. 1951); Hardee, see footnote 17; Borgard, see footnote 3; ACT Program, see footnote 1; Phyllis A. Hornbuckle, John Mahoney, and John H. Borgard, "A Structural Analysis of Student Perceptions of Faculty Advising," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 20 (1979), 296-300.

²⁵Hardec. see footnote 17.

²⁶Walsh. see footnote 5

²⁷Johnson and Sprandel, see footnote 14.

²⁸Grites, see footnote 15.

²⁹Cheryl Jean Polson and Anthony P. Jurich, "The Departmental Academic Advising Center: An Alternative to Faculty Advising," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 20 (1977), 249-253; Cheryl J. Polson and Anthony P. Jurich, "Departmental Advising: Serving Students and the Home Economics Profession," *Journal of Home Economics*, 71 (1979), 42-45.

Procedure

Based upon the above literature review, a questionnaire was constructed to test student's perceptions of the centralized advising center. An attempt was made to test the effectiveness of the advising center, based upon the above dimensions of developmental advising, by asking the student to rate, on a five-point scale his/her overall view of the effectiveness of the advising center and of six dimensions of developmental advising. The students were asked to rate the advising center staff on various advisor traits elicited in the advisor-advisee relationship. Lastly, the student was asked such demographic information, such as "year in school" and "the number of times they had met with their advisor."

The questionnaire was delivered to all undergraduate majors in Family and Child Development who were in their sophomore, junior, and senior years by the graduate assistant from the advising center. This method yielded 116 usable questionnaires. No names were required and numbers were assigned to each questionnaire in order to protect the confidentiality of the subject. The answers were scored and coded by the Advising Center Staff and analyzed by the authors using SPSS programs. See Tables I-IV.

The advising center received very favorable responses on the "outcome" questions. The most positive response was on the "overall view of the advising center." The two questions on program outcome were next most positive, followed by the variable on personal concerns, and the three career outcome variables. This indicates that, although the results are positive, the advising center may need to focus more time and effort on career counseling.

The variables which most effected the students' overall rating of the advising center were drawn predominantly from the interpersonal aspects of advising. Whether the advisor exhibited concern and warmth and whether they could be depended upon were extremely important in determining the students' overall satisfaction with advising. "Guidance in the process of making decisions" was the only "nuts and bolts" aspect of advising to have a major effect in whether the student positively or negatively evaluated the advising process.

The centralized departmental advising center appears, on initial inquiry, to have successfully completed many of the goals of developmental advising. In the long run, it may be more feasible and effective than faculty advising. In addition, some initial data has been compiled on the factors that influence the outcomes of developmental advising, at least as is accomplished in a centralized departmental advising center. The advisor is the primary interface between the student and the institution³ (Moore, 1976; Noel, 1976; Fidler, et. al., 1978). The advances made in advising will have an accelerated effect in strengthening the system. The failures or mistakes will greatly exacerbate the tension between the student and the university. We must have the knowledge base from which we can build our programs. The price is too high for learning by trial and error.

³Carney and Barak, see footnote 1.

⁴Moore, see footnote 4.

TABLE I
Advisor Traits

Trait	Standard	
	Mean	Deviation
'Advisor does not View Me As Burden on Time	1.600	.893
'Advising Not Viewed As Clerical Task	1.607	.960
Treated As An Individual	1.876	.904
Advising Is Cooperative Effort	1.897	.888
Can Depend On Advisor	2.028	.881
Advisor looks at Feelings As Well As Thoughts	2.063	.871
Can Supply Current Information	2.063	.858
Advisor Provides Information About Services	2.207	.857
Advisor is Approachable for Personal Discussions	2.207	1.033
Guides In Process of Making Decisions	2.285	.913
Helps Explore Relevance of Course Work	2.361	.905
'Advisor Does Encourage Me To Talk	2.382	.975
Helps Formulate Realistic Job Expectations	2.552	.905
'Advisor Explores Entire Potential	2.583	.986
Advisor Keeps Well Informed About My Progress throughout the semester	2.715	1.088
'Discusses Career Plans With Advisor	2.931	1.120

'For the sake of the presentation of this table, these items have been reversed from the way they appeared on the questionnaire.

TABLE II
Advisor Traits

Traits	Standard	
	Mean	Deviation
How Often Does Advisor Exhibit Friendliness		
While Advising	1.214	.459
How Often Does Advisor Exhibit Sincerity		
While Advising	1.469	.688
How Often Does Advisor Exhibit Respect While Advising	1.521	.689
How Often Does Advisor Exhibit Warmth	1.566	.734
How Often Does Advisor Exhibit Concern While Advising	1.641	.805
How Often Does Advisor Exhibit Self Disclosure		
While Advising	2.468	1.045

TABLE III
Overall Results

		Standard Mean Deviation
Overall, how do you view advising you are receiving?	1.930	.861
As A Result of Relationship With Advisor:		
Am More Confident in Pursuing of Academic Program	2.079	.914
I Have a More Accurate View of Program	2.165	.975
Able to Decide What to Do About Personal Concerns	2.212	.870
Am More competent to Make A Career Choice	2.324	.972
Know More About Making A Career Decision	2.460	1.016
Have A Better Identity As A Professional	2.540	1.00

TABLE IV
Multiple Regression Using the Student's Overall View
of Advising as the Dependent Variable

Variable	Beta			
My Advisor Exhibits Concern While Advising	.3438			
My Advisor Guides Me in the Process of Making Decisions	1.685			
My Advisor Exhibits Warmth While Advising	1.397			
I Can Depend on My Advisor	.1572			
Multiple R	.7673			
R Squared	.3888			
Adjusted R Squared	.5759			
Standard Error	.5647			
Analysis of Variance	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
Regression	4	58.4343	14.6086	45.8153
Residual	128	40.8138	0.3189	

Results

Descriptive statistics present the student's reactions to the advising center staff. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for 16 questions about advisor traits on a five point scale where 1 = definitely true, 5 = definitely false, 3 = a mid-point of neither true or false. The items are presented in order of increasing means. The students rated the advising center quite high with respect for the individual student and his individual advising process. The last three items also had three of the four largest standard deviations, indicating a good deal of variance in responses. Table 2 lists the means and standard deviations for the number of times, ranging from 1 = almost always to 5 = never, the advisor exhibited six interpersonal traits. Friendliness was most often exhibited and the low standard deviation indicates a good deal of consistency. Five of the six traits were listed as occurring "often" or "almost always" in this sample. The last trait was considerably less frequent than the other five but also had, by far, the largest standard deviation, indicating considerable variability.

Lastly, each student was asked to rate the effectiveness of the advising center program. The results are presented in Table 4. On a five point scale ranging from 1 = excellent to 5 = poor, the students rated the advising center very highly on overall quality. When asked about specific areas of outcome, on a five point scale from 1 = strongly agree, to 5 = strongly disagree, the students rated the advising program high, especially with respect to the academic programs. Their ratings of outcome in the areas of career and professional identity were lower.

A multiple regression analysis was run on the general outcome variable, utilizing the student's overall view of the advising center as the **dependent** variable. The results are presented in **Table 4**. Four variables, explaining 59% of the variance, were determined to each have contributed at least 1% of the total variance of the outcome variable. All four variables focused upon the less traditional aspects of advising.

Discussion

The descriptive statistics speak well for the efficiency of the centralized departmental advising center model as a vehicle for developmental advising. The advising center advisors received positive responses in all phases of advising. When compared to the findings of Carney and Barak³⁴, that 45% of the students found academic advising to be of little value, the centralized advising center model seems to fare well. What is next needed is a systematic study comparing types of advising systems on the same instrument. Although the advising center received high marks on advisor traits, the most positive scores were in the area of the interpersonal aspects of advising. This reinforces the idea that the advising has been centered around the major points of developmental advising and has communicated those values well to the students. This can be seen in the high **cores** for friendliness, sincerity, respect, warmth, and concern given to the advising center by the students. In **discthe** high scores for friendliness, sincerity, respect, warmth, and concern given to the advising center by the students. In discussing advisor traits, it is interesting to note that most of the least positive scores had the highest standard deviations. Some of that is due to the ceiling effect of the extremes on the scale. However, the authors would also hypothesize

The Impact of Advising Skills

that many of those variables, such as "exploring the student's full potential", "keeping well informed about progress", discussing long range career plans," and "self-disclosure" are highly idiosyncratic to the individual student involved. Some students simply do not or will not engage in long, personal self-disclosing discussions with their advisor. This would indicate that those students who opened up on personal matters found the advising center very useful for those discussions. However, those who did not open up, for whatever reason, did not really conceive of the advising center for those purposes. Therefore, although developmental advising can set goals for the psychosocial development of the student, it cannot force a student to accept them as his own.