

The NACADA Journal 1981–1997: Fulfilling Its Purpose?

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This article traces the history and content of the NACADA Journal through an analysis of its 33 published issues. Over the past 18 years of its existence, the Journal has been the purveyor of important information about many topics relevant to the field of academic advising. An extensive analysis of the Journal's content, such as number and length of articles, type of author(s), methodologies, and references cited by authors is provided. Prominent advising themes and trends during two decades are revealed through this study of the Journal.

The professional journal of an organization reflects the body of established and emerging knowledge that is central to the organization's purpose and practices. It is customary to examine the role that professional journals play not only in disseminating the knowledge of the professional organization, but also to reveal through its offerings trends that have historical and practical meaning for the field (Davis & Liddell, 1997; Kuh & Bursky, 1980).

The first issue of the *NACADA Journal* was published in 1981 when the national organization was only one year old. Toni Trombley, NACADA's first president, stated in the initial issue that the *Journal* was intended to “. . . promote our understanding and knowledge of the importance of academic advising and advisors to the fulfillment of student and institutional goals . . . and to lead the way to more efficacious policies and practices” (1981, p. iii). (A complete history of the *NACADA Journal* is contained in the Appendix to this article.)

Although their study was not an analysis of the research in the *NACADA Journal*, Polson and Cashin (1981) surveyed NACADA members about what they considered to be the research priorities of the organization. A practical view was evident as the members' highest priorities concerned “what an effective advising program should look like” and more specifically, “what works?” Other questions thought to be important were “what constitutes an effective advisor[?]” and “what organizational structure is most effective?” Other topics included retention, evaluation, advisor reward systems, and career advising.

Many of these same questions and related top-

ics were identified in a 1982 *NACADA Journal* review of the literature on academic advising. McLaughlin and Starr (1982), editors of *College Student Personnel Abstracts*, reviewed this literature from 1965 and concluded that the research to date had primarily used student opinion surveys and that very little evidence existed to show that advising programs and techniques resulted in positive student outcomes.

As a complement to Polson and Cashin's (1981) findings, McLaughlin and Starr (1982) found two consistent principles that had been maintained in the literature on academic advising: “faculty members are at the core of effective academic advising, and advising is an important element to student success and satisfaction in college” (p. 14). These two articles clearly identified the early needs of the Association membership that could be addressed in the *Journal*.

Polson and Gordon (1988) conducted a follow-up study of the 1981 membership survey and found that many of the earlier areas of concern had not changed significantly. However, faculty advisor training, rewards for faculty members, attention to off-campus and reentry adult students, and computer-assisted advising attracted a higher priority than before. These emerging issues were, at the time, popular topics at the National Conferences and in the *Journal*.

More recently, McGillin (1997) identified the critical issues of the current Association and its members. Her preliminary results show an overwhelming need to address “the impact of technology on advising.” Other issues seem relatively consistent with what had been identified in earlier surveys. These include retention, advisor training, institutional support, and special student populations.

However, the general membership seems to be more concerned about local campus issues rather than broader, national ones. The NACADA Board of Directors expectedly tends to be more concerned about the latter. The *Journal* has the unique opportunity and obligation to address both areas of concern.

Because 1999 marks the 20th anniversary of NACADA's founding, as senior editors of the *Journal* we thought it time to trace the historical and current status of the organization, as well as

academic advising in general, through the pages of the *Journal*. This article summarizes an examination of *NACADA Journals* from 1981 through 1997 to determine a) advising themes that can be gleaned from their content over the past 18 years; b) advising trends that are reflected in *Journal* articles during that same period; c) an analysis of what the *Journal* articles themselves might reveal. More specifically, the areas examined were number of articles and average page length per article, article authorship (including number and gender of authors), the methodologies used in the articles, major advising themes as well as specific topics within those themes, and sources of information cited in the articles.

Method

All articles published in the *NACADA Journal* from 1981 through 1997 were reviewed. They were divided by time periods: 1981 through 1989 and 1990 through 1997. Time periods were used to compare changes between the first and second decade of the organization's existence. Articles published during these two periods were examined by nine variables: number of articles published, number of pages devoted to articles plus the average article length, frequencies of single or multiple authors, frequencies of author by gender, frequencies of methodologies used in the articles, frequencies of major themes in the articles, frequencies of specific topics within the major themes, and a summary of other journals cited. Counted separately were the number of pages devoted to Book Reviews, Forum (1987–1989) and Advisor's Toolbox articles (1993–1997), and the Annotated Bibliography of Recent Research Related to Academic Advising from the National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising (1992–1997).

Authorship of articles was examined in two ways: whether the article was written by a single or multiple author(s) and the gender of the first author (if multiple authors were listed). The

authors' positions included academic administrators, faculty members, coordinators or managers of advising centers, academic advisors, student personnel administrators, and graduate students. The methodologies used by the authors were classified as either conceptual (no data employed) or quantitative (data reported in tables).

We analyzed the *Journal* articles for major themes and found seven emerged: general advising topics, administrative or organizational advising systems, nontraditional student populations, developmental advising, retention, professional development, and the NACADA organization. Frequencies of specific topics under the seven general themes were then determined. When more than one topic appeared in one article (e.g., nursing students and learning strategies, retention of adult students), both topics were counted. Also counted under themes and topics was the content of articles in the Forum and the Advisor's Toolbox sections.

Table 1 indicates the total number of articles published in the *Journal* for each decade. When compared to those of the 1980s, the number of articles decreased substantially (163 to 121) in the 1990s. The number of pages devoted to articles in the 1990s decreased as well (1297 to 803). The average length of each article also decreased from 7.96 pages in the 1980s to 6.69 in the 1990s.

In both decades more articles were published by single authors than by two or more (see Table 2). Although more male than female authors appeared in both these periods, the percentage of female authors increased during the 1990s (see Table 3). The *Journal* contained many more conceptual articles than quantitative articles in both decades (see Table 4).

The frequencies of major advising themes were far more defined in the earlier years of the *Journal* (see Table 5). Major themes in the 1990–1997 articles were almost evenly divided among general advising topics, administrative systems, student populations, and developmental

Table 1 An analysis of *NACADA Journal* articles published between 1981–1997

	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
Number of articles published	163 (57%)	121 (43%)	284
Number of pages devoted to articles	1297(62%)	803(38%)	2100
book reviews	7.96	6.69	7.39
bibliographies (1992–1997)	122 (28%)	312 (72%)	434
The Forum (1987–1989)	N/A	82	82
The Advisor's Toolbox (1993–1997)	126	N/A	126
	N/A	65	65

advising (a special issue devoted to that topic contained 27 articles). In the 1980s, general advising topics were more in evidence, with administrative systems and student populations following in number. In the earlier years, more articles about professional development were published than in the 1990s. The frequency of articles about retention and the NACADA organization between the two decades did not significantly differ.

Table 6 shows the differences in the general themes by percentage between the 1980s and 1990s issues. Table 7 lists specific topics that appeared under each of the seven themes and the number of times they appeared in the *Journal* during both decades as well as their total number.

We also examined the types of sources to which *NACADA Journal* authors referred in their articles. Nearly 300 different professional journals, periodicals, reviews, and bulletins were cited. Books, monographs, conference papers (other than those published by NACADA), newspapers, and unpublished materials were not included. However, over one-half of the citations occurred only once, usually in an article that had a very specific focus or clientele, or the back-

ground of the author(s) was related to the theme of the source. A relatively equal number of the most frequent citations were from sources related to higher education, other educational arenas, psychology, or other publications. The balance of citations were equally distributed between sources related to management or research publications.

Table 8 shows the frequencies of the top 10 resources cited. The 1,075 citations from these top 10 sources represent 57% of the total number of references noted in the *Journal* over the past 18 years.

Discussion

This analysis of the *NACADA Journal* has yielded some fascinating and surprising insights, not only into the *Journal* itself, but the state of academic advising as well. An analysis of the number and length of articles in the *Journal* is most interesting when the first 9 and last 8 years are compared. In the first decade (1981–1989) the number of articles and the pages devoted to articles were significantly higher than in the 1990s. In the last decade (1990–1997) over two-thirds more space was devoted to book reviews than in

Table 2 Frequencies of single or multiple authors of *NACADA Journal* articles

Author(s)	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
Single	93 (57%)	63 (52%)	156 (55%)
Multiple	70 (43%)	58 (48%)	128 (45%)

Table 3 Frequencies of single- or first-author gender of *NACADA Journal* articles

Author	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
Male	103 (63%)	66 (55%)	169 (60%)
Female	60 (37%)	55 (45%)	115 (40%)

Table 4 Frequencies of methodologies of *NACADA Journal* articles

Methodology	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
Conceptual (no data)	107 (66%)	79 (65%)	186 (65%)
Quantitative (in tables)	56 (34%)	42 (35%)	98 (35%)

Table 5 Frequencies of major themes of *NACADA Journal* articles

Theme	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
General advising topics	75 (68%)	36 (32%)	111
Administrative/organizational systems	58 (62%)	35 (38%)	93
Student populations	47 (59%)	32 (41%)	79
Developmental advising [27 in 14(2), 1994]	8 (21%)	31 (79%)	39
Professional development	18 (75%)	6 (25%)	24
Retention	11 (61%)	7 (39%)	18
NACADA organization	11 (65%)	6 (34%)	17

Notes. Totals exceed number of articles because some had multiple themes. The Forum and Advisor's Toolbox articles were included in statistics.

the earlier decade. This page allocation suggests that the number and quality of articles submitted to the *Journal* declined in the 1990s. Past editors of the *Journal*, in fact, have indicated receipt of fewer submissions. Speculation about this dearth of material submitted to the *Journal* has centered around the diverse nature of the people performing academic advising functions (academic administrators, faculty members, full-time advisors, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students). This advisor heterogeneity may also explain why fewer research articles were published in the *NACADA Journal* than conceptual ones (35% to 65%). Faculty are more apt to perform research in their disciplines than in academic advising and not all full-time advisors are interested in, have the academic skills, or feel they have the time for research enterprises. (It would also be informative to collect 18 years of data concerning the number, type, and reasons why submissions have been rejected by *Journal* editors.)

The predominant advising themes gleaned from the articles of the *Journal* have not changed over the past 18 years. However, the articles do reflect more interest in general advising topics, administrative and organizational concerns, and certain types of students in the 1980s. This is consistent with the practical concerns expressed by the membership in earlier surveys. When the number of articles in the special issue on developmental advising (1994) is not considered, more articles on this theme appear in the earlier issues than in the later ones (eight in the 1980s; three in the 1990s).

Are any advising trends revealed in the pages of the *Journal* over the past 18 years? Past trends are more apparent than future ones. When the top-

ics within the themes are examined, several areas that were predominant in the first decade—such as advising techniques, major/career choice, theory/philosophy, legal issues, peer advising, and advisor training—are not as apparent in the later years. As suggested before, this may indicate a more practical perspective of advisors during the early years of NACADA. While most student populations were represented evenly in articles in both decades, more articles were written about student athletes and adult students in the 1980s. Student retention was a topic of interest in both time periods.

One topical area of *Journal* articles that did not increase as expected was technology. In the first decade information about computerized advising was conveyed in five articles. Seven articles on the subject appeared in 1990s issues, many of which appeared in the Advisor's Toolbox section. Since students are becoming more experienced in this area and advising practices more technologically advanced, advisors must constantly update their skills. This need was confirmed in McGillin's (1997) assessment of critical issues. Although NACADA has produced a full-length monograph on this subject (Kramer & Childs, 1996), the *Journal* must assume a greater responsibility for disseminating new information on technology.

One trend that appears to be consistent with other journal analyses (Davis & Liddell, 1981), is a shift in the gender of authors. In the 1980s male authors dominated by over 3 to 1. In the 1990s the number of female authors increased 10%. The number of single or multiple authors remained consistent in both decades.

Citations used by *Journal* authors warrant review. First, the *NACADA Journal* has become the primary source for itself. This observation substantiates the need, purpose, and utilization of the *Journal* by both practitioners and researchers in the field of academic advising. It also serves as a caution. That is, authors should not rely so heavily on NACADA publications that members lose sight of the many other resources available.

Table 8 also shows that more references were cited in the 1990–1997 issues than in earlier ones, although fewer articles were actually published during that period (see Table 1). This discrepancy may be partly due to the change from the Modern Language Association (MLA) publication style to that of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1987. The substantive difference between the two formats is that only specific footnote citations were included in the MLA

Table 6 Percentages of major themes of *NACADA Journal* articles by decade

Theme	1980s <i>n</i> = 228	1990s <i>n</i> = 153
	%	%
General advising topics	33	23
Administrative/ organizational systems	25	23
Student populations	21	21
Developmental advising	3	20
Retention	5	5
Professional development	8	4
NACADA organization	5	4

Note. Decades: 1981–1989 and 1990–1997.

Table 7 Frequencies of specific topics within major themes published in the *NACADA Journal* between 1981–1997

Major Themes	Specific Topics	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
General advising topics	Advising techniques	23	6	29
	Major/career choice	14	5	19
	Student perceptions/adjustment	9	10	19
	Students in academic difficulty	9	7	16
	Theory/philosophy	10	0	10
	Orientation	4	2	6
	Testing/study skills	0	3	3
	Course selection	0	3	3
Administrative/organizational systems	Administrative	14	12	26
	Evaluation	9	5	14
	Faculty advising	9	5	14
	Campus environment	8	4	12
	Computerized advising	5	7	12
	Peer advising	6	1	7
	Models	5	0	5
	Distance advising	0	1	1
	Experiential learning	1	0	1
	Residence halls	1	0	1
Student populations	Athletes	12	1	13
	Adults	8	1	9
	African American/minorities	4	5	9
	Engineering students	2	4	6
	Freshmen	3	3	6
	Undecided	3	2	5
	Graduate students	1	3	4
	Pre-med	1	3	4
	Transfer	2	2	4
	Women	1	2	3
	Restricted majors	2	0	2
	Education	2	0	2
	Nursing	0	1	1
	Honors	0	1	1
	Disabled	0	1	1
	Troubled students	0	1	1
	Business	1	0	1
	2-year students	1	0	1
	International students	1	0	1
	Developmental students	1	0	1
Developmental advising		8	31	39
Student retention		11	7	18
Professional development	Legal issues	7	1	8
	Advisor training	5	0	
	Grant writing	0	1	1
	Unionization	0	1	1
	CAS standards	0	1	1
	Consulting	1	0	1
	Graduate programs/prep.	1	0	1

Table 7 Continued

Major Themes	Specific Topics	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
NACADA organization	Advising course	1	0	1
	Advising literature review	1	0	1
	Humor	1	0	1
	Bibliography (adult)	1	0	1
	Presidents' addresses	4	4	8
	Research award winners	2	0	2
	History of NACADA	0	1	1
	Core values of academic advising	0	1	1
	Member surveys:			
	Research priorities	1	0	1
	Advising issues	1	0	1
	Advising as a profession	1	0	1
	Letters re: the <i>Journal</i>	1	0	1
	Guest editorial (adults)	1	0	1

Note. Tabulations include Forum and Advisor's Toolbox topics.

Table 8 Frequencies of the top 10 sources cited in the *NACADA Journal*

Journal or Source	1981–1989	1990–1997	Total
<i>NACADA Journal</i>	97	223	320
<i>Journal of College Student Personnel/Development</i>	162	118	280
<i>NASPA Journal</i>	52	36	88
ERIC	32	53	85
<i>Personnel & Guidance Journal/Journal of Counseling & Development</i>	49	22	71
Dissertation abstracts/dissertations	35	25	60
NACADA conferences/monographs	30	19	49
<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>	17	28	45
<i>Research in Higher Education</i>	21	18	39
<i>Review of Higher Education</i>	20	18	38
Total	515	560	1075

style, whereas all references are included under APA guidelines.

Many individual articles were cited more than once. However, prolific use of identical references did not skew the overall frequency distributions. For example, The *Junior College Journal*, which contained O'Banion's classic article on developmental advising, was cited a total of 12 times, which placed it 24th among all journals cited. Conversely, various articles from *Engineering Education* were cited, and this journal ranked in a tie for 25th place.

The range of publication types cited is fascinating. Beyond the expected publication sources in higher education, other education arenas, and psychology, the *Journal* has included citations from the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the

Harvard Business, Education, and Law Reviews, the *American Journal of Agriculture Economics*, the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *Quaker Life*, and even *The Holy Bible*, to name a few.

Conclusion

Has the *NACADA Journal* fulfilled its purpose? If its intent is to "promote the understanding and knowledge of the importance of academic advising" as the first President of NACADA proposed, then we think it has succeeded. It has undoubtedly "led the way to more efficacious policies and procedures." It is difficult to estimate the influence of the *Journal* on the field of academic advising in general or on individual students and their institutions. Pure research on the

effectiveness of certain advising practices or the effects of advising on positive student outcomes has been sparsely reported in the *Journal*. However, it must be acknowledged that the *Journal* can be only as good as the submissions from the clientele it serves. The hope is that the NACADA research grant program will continue to encourage in-depth studies for *Journal* publication.

As academic advising responds to future technological advances and student needs, the *Journal* editors must continue to encourage potential authors to submit articles about important issues related to advising as they emerge. The *Journal* must also continue to reflect the knowledge and practices of the broad spectrum of topics that advising embraces. As higher education evolves in the next century, academic advisors must be sensitive to the changing nature of tomorrow's students, the delivery of advising services in the distance learning environment, and how innovative and proven advising practices can influence institutional policies and procedures. The *Journal* can play a critical role in monitoring and fostering these inevitable changes.

Appendix NACADA *Journal* history

As one reviews the short history of the *Journal*, several noteworthy observations can be made. First, an enormous amount of credit must be given to Dr. Edward L. Jones, the first editor (January 1981–September 1986). Having previously published several of his own works, Dr. Jones knew exactly how to secure the copyright and the ISSN Number, index other journals, and select a printing service. Without his expertise the *NACADA Journal* would not likely have been produced as early as 1981.

In the inaugural issue, he chose to include the entire NACADA Membership Directory of nearly 500 names, titles, and addresses. This listing was not simply filler, but rather an acknowledgment of the early members of the new Association. The Directory was published again in Volume 2, Number 1, March 1982 and included over 700 names. Such a listing would not appear again, since the membership was steadily growing.

Dr. Jones also envisioned the potential for the *Journal* to become a revenue source for the Association. In his fifth issue he introduced advertisements for University Microfilms International, which now included the *NACADA Journal* in its index. Other advertisers included the Chronicle of Higher Education and the Association for the Study of Higher Education

(ASHE-ERIC Research Reports).

Second, each subsequent editor has been able to capitalize on his predecessors' hard work, dedication, and innovation. Yet each has left us with his own unique contributions that still characterize the *Journal* today.

Ed Danis, the second editor (Spring 1987–Fall 1989), made several noticeable changes beginning with his first issue. He changed the format to a larger size, using a different color for a slick cover. He also opted for the American Psychological Association (APA) style over that of the Modern Language Association (MLA), and he added abstracts for each article. He changed the issue date to Spring/Fall, rather than by month, mostly because of the uncertainty of the actual printing/ mailing date of each issue.

He added the Advising Forum as a regular nuts-and-bolts feature, as well as Ed's Notes, a personal commentary on current advising issues, the *Journal*, or Association concerns. He continued the publication of the NACADA Leadership Directory in each issue, the ACT/NACADA Award Winners, and some of the advertising aspects.

The third editor, Howard Schein (Spring 1990–Fall 1995), retained the same size, style, and format of the *Journal* through his first three issues. He later made minor modifications in the cover design, the second of which has remained (with a new logo) through the current issues.

Dr. Schein's contributions to the content of the *Journal* were varied. Although he attempted to emphasize the need for research-based (quantitative) articles, the types of articles published were actually in the same approximate proportion as in earlier years (see Table 4). He introduced several features of the *Journal* that still appear today. One of these included the Annotated Bibliography section as a regular collaborative effort with the National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising. Another feature is the *Journal* symposium general session speaker at the National Conference. This invited speaker is also obligated to write a follow-up article for the *Journal*. His third sustaining contribution is the Advisor's Toolbox section, which includes briefer articles, either conceptual or quantitative, but based in the literature.

Three additional significant efforts marked Dr. Schein's editorship. One was the Classics Revisited special issue, volume 14, number 2, in which 25 authors (or co-authors) were invited to review, reflect, and respond to O'Banion's and Crookston's landmark articles on academic advis-

Figure A Milestones in the NACADA Journal 1981–1997

Oct. 1979		Edward L. Jones appointed Chair of the Journal Committee, subsequently to become first editor
Jan. 1981	Vol. 1, No. 1	Inaugural issue published; First membership survey published (Research Priorities)
Nov. 1982	Vol. 2, No. 2	First special issue: Resources for Advisors
Mar. 1983	Vol. 3, No. 1	First advertisement (University Microfilms)
Apr. 1984	Vol. 4, No. 1	First of only 3 photographs ever included
Oct. 1984	Vol. 4, No. 2	Second special issue: Resources for Advisors
Mar. 1986	Vol. 6, No. 1	Third special issue: Resources for Advising Student-Athletes, including complete NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete; 5-year Cumulative Index published with special editor, Lynn Barnett, Associate Director, ERIC
Sept. 1986	Vol. 6, No. 2	First NACADA publication of CAS Standards and Guidelines (both General and for Academic Advising)
Spring 1987	Vol. 7, No. 1	First issue by Edward J. Danis, second editor
Fall 1988	Vol. 8, No. 2	Second membership survey published (Issues)
Fall 1989	Vol. 9, No. 2	Special section on The Adult Learner including a comprehensive bibliography
Spring 1990	Vol. 10, No. 1	First issue by editor Howard Schein
Fall 1990 and Spring 1991	Vol. 10, No. 2 Vol. 11, No. 1	Only double issue ever published; First Annotated Bibliography of Research Related to Academic Advising published in collaboration with the National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising
Fall 1991	Vol. 11, No. 2	Longest article published (82 pages by Harry Edwards); Bibliography on advising student-athletes
Fall 1993	Vol. 13, No. 2	First Advisor's Toolbox section included
Fall 1994	Vol. 14, No. 2	Classics Revisited issue (reflections on landmark articles by O'Banion and Crookston)
Spring 1995	Vol. 15, No. 1	NACADA Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising published
Fall 1995	Vol. 15, No. 2	Second Cumulative Index (volumes 1–15) published
Spring 1996	Vol. 16, No. 1	First issue by editor Michael L. Lynch; First citation of NACADA monograph appeared

ing. Terry O'Banion himself was one of the respondents.

Another of these specially recognizable efforts is that he expanded the advertising opportunities initiated by Ed Jones. Some of the new advertisers included Jossey-Bass Publishers, the *Black Issues in Higher Education* news magazine, Transaction Publishers, The American Associa-

tion of Counseling and Development, and the American Medical Association. In addition, in his last issue, he published the second Cumulative Index of the *NACADA Journal*, volumes 1–15.

The current editor, Michael Lynch (Spring 1996 to present), has not had the longevity during which to initiate significant changes in the *Journal*. Part of this status quo also reflects the “if

it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy. The *Journal* has come a long way and has been mas-saged well over the years.

However, in his short tenure as editor, Dr. Lynch has included three special contributions that have informed the readership of the status of research and publication in the field of academic advising. The first of these appeared in his initial issue, wherein he carefully described the complete process of manuscript submission to publication, including the rates of acceptance, rejection, and revision.

Another informative contribution was a guest editorial by Vicki McGillin (1996), Chair of the NACADA Research Committee, in which she reported the "disconnect between the needs of practitioners and the activities of scholars." She found that the practitioners' needs were more global, comparative, and multidimensional, whereas the researchers have focused on more specific, individualized, and isolated characteristics. These findings certainly have implications for the Association and the *Journal*.

We hope that this article has served to inform the readership of the *Journal's* growth and development, the relevance to its readers, and a confirmation that it is, in fact, fulfilling its purpose to enrich the knowledge, skills, and professional development of people concerned with academic advising in higher education.

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