

From the Editor

A few years ago, Wes Habley and Virginia Gordon, editors of *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, asked me to write a chapter on the status of recognition and reward as it related to academic advising. Having over 30 years of experience in higher education, many of which were directly involved with academic advising, I gladly accepted the assignment under the misguided assumption it would not be a difficult task.

As I began to research the topic it became apparent that this was going to be a challenge. This was confirmed by the data generated by the national surveys of academic advising produced by American College Testing (ACT). It is clear from the data produced in ACT's fifth national survey that there is no consistent campus-wide practice that recognizes and rewards academic advisors (Habley & Morales, 1998). And fewer than one in three campuses recognize, reward, or compensate faculty for academic advising. And there has been a consistent decline in all types of faculty advisor recognition strategies from 1987 through the present.

The research that I was able to uncover almost exclusively dealt with the extrinsic rewards for academic advising. Extrinsic rewards are important for both the individual advisor and the institution because they make visible the importance of academic advising as an integral component of the infrastructure of the institution. However, educators

must not lose sight of the importance of intrinsic awards. Good advisors receive many intrinsic awards from the knowledge that they have helped students in their quests for knowledge and from watching students grow and develop through the advising experience (Kerr, 2000).

As was stated in my chapter on Recognition and Reward for Excellence in Advising, I could not include a detailed discussion on the intrinsic rewards of advising. This was not because I valued extrinsic more than intrinsic rewards but because there has not been a great deal written on intrinsic rewards for academic advising. It is therefore a pleasure that I present for your edification the keynote address given by Dr. Gary L. Kramer to the Utah Advising and Orientation Conference on May 23, 2002, entitled, "The Light Within Us: Advising with Heart and Mind."

Thomas J. Kerr

References

- Habley, W. R., & Morales, R. H. (1998). Advising models: Goal achievement and program effectiveness. *NACADA Journal*, 18(1), 35–41.
- Kerr, T. J. (2000). Recognition and reward for excellence in advising. In V. N. Gordon & W. R. Habley, *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The Light Within Us: Advising With Heart and Mind

Gary L. Kramer, Brigham Young University

Introduction

I am just now beginning to understand what T. S. Eliot observed about life's journey when he concluded: "We must not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time." From my research over the past 20 years, most of the observations I've made are eerily reminiscent of Eliot's observation.

No single action can do more to set the academic tone of the collegiate experience and to establish a comprehensive approach to student academic success than new student orientation and advising. Furthermore, a well-conceived program comprised of effective advisors exposes the student to the importance of, and techniques for, both academic success and individual development. If an

advisor assumes that this premise is correct, he or she could ask, "What is the light within us that makes it so?"

The Light Within Us: Advising with Heart and Mind

The Salt Lake Winter Olympics theme was Light the Fire Within. And the athletes (and for that matter all who were involved with the Olympics) instilled a fervor for the Olympics in everyone. We expected and looked for the best. In similar fashion, both students and colleagues in higher education expect the very best from advisors. And like the Olympic athletes, advisors deliver most of the time.

In this context of superior service, Harriet Sheridan, in a paper for the American Association of Higher Education (1988), wrote about the

Compleat Professor. (She took the rendering of c-o-m-p-l-e-a-t from the 17th-century writer and great sportsman Izzak Walton who described the art of fishing in a book entitled *The Compleat Angler*.) Sheridan proposed a reeducation of the college professor and suggested several attributes of the compleat professor. One might ask: "What attributes constitute the compleat advisor or what is the light within us that makes a positive difference to students? What advisor activities bring about good advising and thus a well-conceived program?" These and other questions we'll explore together because, as Elie Wessel stated, "Questions tend to unite us whereas answers tend to divide us."

I've concluded that the compleat advisor cares and collaborates. She or he is also constant (or is consistent) and courageous in the performance of duty even when caught between the system and student needs.

The Compleat Advisor Cares

Step back in time to when you were a student and select someone who had an influence on your academic career, one who helped you make the connection between your personal and academic life. What was the defining moment or quality experience for you? My guess is that this memorable person cared about you. Probably, long after you have forgotten the information and advice given, you remember most the gift of self. It is interesting that this characteristic of the memorable experience is supported by significant research over the past few years, particularly that by Pascarella and Terenzini in *How College Affects Students*, Vincent Tinto in *Leaving College*, Alexander Astin in *What Matters Most in College*, and most recently by Richard Light in *Making the Most of College*. After 10 years of research at over 90 institutions, Light, a Harvard professor of statistics, concluded that the most successful advisors are those who build relationships with students by tailoring advising sessions to each undergraduate's unique situation.

In the best cases of success, students are involved with advisors who care about them; that is, the advisor shows interest in issues that matter to the advisee. Furthermore, qualitative, caring advising is not one-sided. The research shows that when coupled with students who adjust expectations (learn that Mr. Chips is not on every corner), take initiative, share the advising responsibility, and come prepared to meetings, important outcomes are more likely to occur, including a) satisfaction with college, b) academic achievement, c) persistence to graduation, and d) personal and academic success.

That's pretty significant stuff when one considers the effect of a caring person in the institution. The percentage of successful outcomes goes up when the other three attributes of compleatness are manifested in the advisor.

The Compleat Advisor Collaborates

During WWII, butchers and cooks could legally substitute horse meat, up to 50%, for beef, which was in short supply. In those days, Bubba, a stew vendor, was accused by his competition of making stew with more than 50% horse meat, so the Food and Drug Administration came to investigate Bubba's stew. Bubba told the investigators that his accusers' claims were false. He said, "For every rabbit I put in, I match it with a horse!"

Unlike our friend Bubba and his stew, the compleat advisor knows the characteristics of the advisees in his or her charge. Furthermore, students see support services, like advising and orientation, from a horizontal perspective rather than with the vertical hierarchy that departments use to define themselves. The collaborative advisor understands that freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors face different educational tasks. Key academic needs of students are summarized in the compleat model, in which coordination with others is emphasized (Kramer, 2000).

Students' integration into the academic institution is solidified as advisors become managers of campus resources on behalf of students. In short, it takes an academic village or community to raise a student. Knowing who is entering the system and how the students are progressing in it is the key to bringing about student success. Further, the compleat advisor enlists the aid of many in the university community.

The Compleat Advisor is Constant

Will Rogers was asked what he would do to stop German submarines from tracking and sinking Allied ships. He replied, "Warm up the Atlantic Ocean to bring the subs to the surface." When asked how he intended to warm up an ocean, he responded, "I've told you how to resolve the problem; you'll have to figure out the details."

The compleat advisor not only appropriately identifies the problem but stays with it until it is resolved. Have you ever called a department store and been transferred from one place to another and have to explain your situation over and over again? Boston College administrators took this type of situation and reengineered their student services. They understood this principle from Levine

and Cureton (1998): "Students are bringing to higher education the same consumer expectations we and they have for every other commercial enterprise they deal with. Their (and our) focus is on convenience, quality, service, and cost."

Boston College administrators took the following actions:

1. They placed people who know and care in the front line. They turned around the former and unfortunate situation of having the least trained and paid people as the first point of contact for students and the public.
2. They instituted the philosophy that advisors assume responsibility for the problem (or own it) until it is resolved.
3. If the student needs to visit with another department, the advisor makes the arrangements by summarizing the situation and student needs.
4. A few days after coordinating with the other departmental personnel, the compleat advisor follows up with the student to determine whether the matter has been resolved. (Nice touch!)

The Compleat Advisor is Courageous

This short story of David Birley, a bass drummer who played in a cadet band, illustrates the type of courage embodied by the compleat advisor. This cadet was out of step with the rest of the band as the members began their maneuvers one beautiful Saturday afternoon before a throng of spectators. Like all bass drummers, Birley depended on the music to keep in step. However, the rest of the band followed the lead of the drum major who, on this rare occasion, had stepped off on the wrong foot. There were many attempts to get David Birley back in step with everyone else, but Birley insisted that he was in step with the music. Finally, the band director, alerted to the dilemma, issued the strangest order ever heard on that parade ground, "With the exception of Birley, parade: Change step!"

(Thoreau perhaps would have felt right at home with the courage of Birley. Thoreau said: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps

it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him speak to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.")

Some people on campus care about what advisors are doing, but not everyone shares the advisor viewpoint. Although advisors do not offer a panacea for all of the ills of higher education, they can choose to be bellwethers for students because they are usually the first and last contacts between students and the institution. Often both the system and the student meet face-to-face, if not head-to-head, in an advisor's office. Thus, advisors have the opportunity to represent the best of the institution to the student and the best of the student to the institution. Such brokering can be the most satisfying of advisors' day-in and day-out work.

Conclusion

Advisors and orientation leaders who proceed fearlessly to the beat of their own drummers (being advising bellwethers) will march forward with confidence to the step of the music they hear. I hope the music they hear is in step with the needs of students and the appropriate (perhaps unique) responses they need to give. Every compleat advisor can do something to make a difference in the lives of advisees and can maximize the light within her- or himself to a) build relationships with students by tailoring advising to their unique situations, b) involve the campus community to create a collaborative system of services: It's a community love affair to serve students, c) seek to own the solutions to problems, and d) act as bellwethers and represent the very best of the institution to students.

References

- Kramer, G. L. (2000). Advising students at different educational levels. In V. N. Gordon, W. R. Habley, & Associates (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Levine, A., & Cureton, J. S. (1998). What we know about today's college student. *About Campus*, 3(1), 4-9.
- Sheridan, H. (1988). The compleat professor. *AAHE Bulletin*, 41(4), 3-7.