Faculty Socialization into the Advising Role: An Examination of Information and Information Sources that Shape Role Learning

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Faculty advisors at four institutions completed questionnaires designed to categorize the information they received when learning advising responsibilities. They identijied role-set members who provided this information and its usefulness by type. They receive more organizational (policies and procedures) information than any other type of advising information, which they rate high in usefulness. While they receive formal appraisal information less often than any other type and rate it lowest in usefulness, faculty members receive informal appraisal messages from students. The jindings warrant further investigation of the influence of students as socialization agents in the faculty advisor role-learning process.

KEY WORDS: advisor training, faculty advisors, faculty development, professional development

Introduction

Faculty members in higher education must readily perform a variety of roles, including teacher, committee member, scholar, departmental colleague, and academic advisor. Of these responsibilities, the role of faculty advisor generally receives the least attention during a faculty member's socialization into an academic institution. According to Ryan (1995, p. 35), college teachers receive "little preparation in graduate school for this responsibility, an4 at the majority of institutions surveyed by ACT, the only training or developmental assistance given to faculty is a one-day or half-day workshop each year." This finding is significant because, as Habley (1995, p. 12) suggested, "Between 75 percent and 90 percent of all the academic advising that takes place on this nation's campuses" are comprised of a faculty-based advising delivery system. When searching the academic advising literature, one finds little explanation about how faculty members learn their responsibilities as advisors. Because the complexity of advising has increased since the mid-1980s (Ryan, 1995), lack of role-acquisition understanding is problematic. Researchers have examined faculty member perceptions of advising (Dillon & Fisher, 2000; Frost, 1993; Kelly, 1995; Kramer, 1984; Larsen & Brown, 1983; Mahoney, Borgard, & Hornbuckle, 1978), but few have systematically studied the communication dynamics surrounding faculty socialization into the advising role.

In the presented study, I examine the information needs of faculty advisors who have been through the socialization process. In addition, I determine which individuals in the faculty member's role set contributed key advising-related information.

Organizational Socialization Processes

Van Maanen (1975, p. 67) offered one of the most widely cited definitions of organizational socialization: *"[Itis]* the process by which a person learns the values, norms and required behaviors which permit him to participate as a member of the organization." Individuals glean much about their new roles from daily interactions on the job. Van Maanen and Schein (1979, p. 215) maintained, "Colleagues, superiors, subordinates, clients, and other associates support and guide the individual in learning the new role."

Jablin (1984) conceptualized organizational socialization as a process in which individuals are not only absorbed into the organization's culture but are also able to take an active part in creating or shaping their own roles within the organization. In addition, Jablin (1984) and Van Maanen and Schein (1979) considered organizational socialization to be an ongoing process that continues throughout the organizational career of the employee.

For successful operations of any organization, employee needs for communication must be met during the socialization process. Employees must learn the expectations of their roles so that they can act consistently with their peers' expectations for role performance within the organization. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) cited increased turnover, lowered performance, dissatisfaction, negative work attitudes, and stress as associated with ineffective socialization. Because faculty advising is important to student success, contributors to the academic advising literature should examine the factors that influence faculty role-learning of advising. Researchers have found that the determination of how faculty acquire the information that shapes role performance is an interesting and practical line of inquiry. They found that role learning is particularly important because numerous colleges and universities have no clear or comprehensive

statement about academic advising (Kramer, Arrington, & Chynoweth, 1985; Larsen & Brown, 1983).

During assimilation, faculty members not only receive inadequate direction into the advising role; they also encounter inconsistent views on the definition of an effective advisor. On a theoretical level, the contributors to advising literature seem to favor a holistic approach to advising in which both the advisor and the student engage in developmental activities that contribute to the growth of both parties. However, some authors suggest that the translation of the theoretical principles into day-to-day advising practice is problematic. Harrington and Creamer (1998, p. 7) claimed that despite the available definitions of developmental advising, "No consensus exists concerning the overall purpose or methods of developmental academic advising." Beyond noting the difficulty in translating the developmental perspective from a conceptual element to a practical skill, the advising scholars offer little to help one's understanding of how faculty members learn and shape their advising responsibilities. Possibly as a consequence of ineffective socialization practices at institutions and diverse role expectations from potential socialization agents (such as academic administrators, faculty peers, and advisees), academic staff have not generated a consensus definition of the advising role among faculty (Kelly, 1995).

Language at the academy will be dominated by ambiguous interpretations of advising responsibilities as long as administrators leave advising goals unarticulated and the faculty advisor's role learning to chance. In the organizational communication literature, one finds a compelling rationale for devoting attention to faculty socialization practices.

Content of Socialization

To become socialized into a particular role, a newcomer must learn various types of information. In a study of information usefulness and acquisition in the encounter stage of organizational assimilation, Morrison (1995) argued that researchers were not completely successful in elucidating role learning because they lacked a general typology scheme through which to identify the various types of information a newcomer must acquire. In response to this need, Morrison (1995, p. 132) reviewed the literature to create and test a list of seven information types that might be most helpful to newcomers:

> Technical information about how to execute required tasks;
>
> Referent information about what is required and expected as part of one's job role;
>
> Social information about other people and one's relationship with those people;
>
> Appraisal information about how others are evaluating one's performance and behavior;
>
> Normative information about the organization's culture;
>
> Organizational information about the firm's structure, procedures, products and services, and performance; and
>
> Political information about the distribution of power within the organization.

To determine if these seven types of information were categories of information that employees would need to know upon entry into an organization and the extent to which they were viewed as important to a newcomer, Morrison surveyed 117 graduates of a large business school in the northeastern United States 6 months following their graduation dates. Morrison published several noteworthy findings. First, newcomers may need to acquire information in all seven categories. Previous researchers had not accounted for all seven types of information when studying socialization. Second, participants in Morrison's investigation reported that appraisal and referent information were the most useful kinds of information, which adds support to previous scholars' claims that newcomers are interested in job mastery. Third, new hires need political knowledge of the organization, but few researchers have accounted for this type of knowledge in the socialization literature. Fourth, graduates rated the usefulness of social information relatively low. Fifth, the participants rated organizational information as rather low in usefulness; however, it is the most prevalently offered information that they received.

Morrison offered a useful typology for investigating a wide range of information that faculty advisors may need or receive with regard to performance. While authors of the academic advising literature have identified the importance of "informational, conceptual, and relational" topics in advising training (Habley, 1995, p. 15), researchers have an opportunity to learn about how faculty members view the usefulness of training information and to consider other information types that may be influencing the enactment of the faculty-

advising role.

Information Sources

Just as organizational newcomers must learn a variety of information types, the sources from which they can learn this information are extensive. Fisher (1986) maintained that most people in an organization learn in some way from other people or agents who may or may not be trying to consciously socialize them. For example, supervisors have an important role in clarifying task requirements for an employee; thus, for successful communication, employees should perceive supervisors as being available and helpful (Louis. Posner, & Powell, 1983). Interactions with peers and coworkers are a source of social support that appears to have a positive influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Fisher. 1986; Louis et al., 1983). Customers and other organizational members may be additional key sources in the assimilation process, but in the literature, scholars have not prioritized the influence of such sources. Few researchers have empirically investigated the role of other agents (nonsupervisors and nonpecrs) during the assimilation process. In their writings on socialization, few authors have mentioned clients as potential socialization sources (Fisher: 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and studies are needed that investigate how customers might influence the socialization of newcomers. One can reasonably assume that clients could be classified as members of a service employee's role set because customers likely hold expectations for the employee's performance of the service role.

Thus, in examining the assimilation of new faculty advisors in a higher education institution, scholars must not overlook the many daily interactions between students and faculty members outside of the classroom. Faculty advisors may spend more time interacting with students than they do with department chairs or colleagues. Because of the relatively large amount of contact they have with faculty members, advisees could strongly influence performance expectations for the advising role; student input may be especially important in institutions where administrators have not clarified advising responsibilities. As potential sources of influence, students could contribute to increased conflicts regarding advisor-role expectations, particularly if they have diverse advising needs across different points of their academic careers.

Administrators need to account for the influence of students in shaping the faculty role because many in the academy have accepted the student-as-consumer metaphor that has emerged in higher education (Browne, Hiers, & Quinn, 1995; McMillan & Cheney, 1996; Schwartzman, 1995). In addition, many administrators have embraced the principles of total quality management, and as a result, they have portrayed students as customers. Schwartzman (1995, p. 217) argued "If metaphors represent a structural change in a field of meanings, then the configuration of students as customers has significant consequences for how all interpersonal relationships in education are conceived." Some implications of the metaphor are embodied by academician statements such as "power flows from the students" (Browne et al., 1995) and "the customer is always right" (McMillan & Cheney, 1995). Consequently, professors may feel pressure to achieve customer satisfaction and to prioritize the short-term needs of students rather than attend to their long-term needs (Browne et al., 1995). In addition. because of this metaphor, advisors may feel a tension as they try to manage expectations generated by student desires and those derived from legitimate academic needs. While scholars debate the full range of consequences associated with this metaphor, academicians' acceptance of the metaphor places "students at the center of the educational process" (Schwartzman, 1995), and faculty members must acknowledge student expectations.

Researchers have a great opportunity to learn about socialization processes as they apply to academic advising. I used the following set of research questions in a doctoral research project designed to study faculty socialization into the advising role:

1. Which types of information regarding the advising role do the faculty receive?
2. What types of information regarding the advising role do faculty members rate as useful to the role-acquisition process?
3. Which sources in the faculty advisor's role set contribute role-related information?

Method

Survey

To generate results that allowed for statistical inference as well as meaningful interpretation of the respondents' experiences, I collected data through the survey method and the structured interview. Faculty members at four colleges participated in the study. The volunteers were all employed at institutions with a faculty-based advising system and an on-campus advising center in which staff coordinate advising-related information and activities for both students and faculty. Participating schools are small

to mid-sized liberal arts institutions that foster the integration of liberal and professional studies. Two schools are located in the midwest, one in the south, and one in the northwest.

I mailed survey packets to 573 full-time faculty members. Approximately 2 to 4 days before the faculty received the survey packets, an administrator from each school sent a letter to the faculty explaining that the institution had granted permission for a study on faculty advising. The letters were designed to grant credibility to the project as well as to foster faculty interest and voluntary cooperation in the study. Approximately 2 weeks after the surveys were distributed, I sent a follow-up postcard to each faculty member as a reminder to complete and return the survey.

Through the survey, I asked faculty advisors to report the types of information they had received about advising (Appendix A). In addition, I asked respondents to use a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = great amount; 1 = none received) to indicate the amount of information they received for each of the information types. I used two items to assess each of the seven information types (2 = no information received; 10 = a great amount of information received). I also asked them to rate the usefulness of the information using a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = very useful; 1 = not useful). I used two items to assess each of the seven information types (2 = information is not useful; 10 = information is very useful). In addition, I asked respondents to reveal the source(s) of the information (dean/chair, colleague, advisee, other, or no source).

A total of 234 surveys were returned, and 221 surveys were deemed usable for this analysis (39% response rate). I did not include surveys that were incomplete or those in which the respondents indicated that they no longer had advising responsibilities. The breakdown of returned surveys per college is presented in Table 1. Respondents ranged in age from 25 to 69 years (M = 47.5, SD = 9.93). Table 2 presents a demographic profile of the respondents. The average number of advisees per faculty member was 20.4 representing a range of 0 advisees (n = 2) to 150 (n = 1). Time spent in advising activities is presented in Table 3. Approximately 50% of the faculty advisors reported meeting with a typical advisee three or four times during the academic year, and 73% reported that advising sessions last 15–30 minutes.

Interview

To solicit faculty participation in the phone interviews, I enclosed a short form in the survey packet. On the form, I asked respondents if they would be interested in talking with me for 15–20 minutes about faculty advising. Eighty-one faculty members (36.7%) returned the interview participation form.

So that I could develop an interview guide use-

Table 1 Survey distribution and return rate

Institution	Number Distributed	Number Returned	Percentage
A	101	40	40
B	135	49	36
C	109	46	42
D	228	86	38

Table 2 Demographic profile of participants, $N = 221$

Characteristic	Mean	SD	Percentage	*n*
Age	47.5	9.93	—	—
Years teaching at institution	12.2	9.39	—	—
Years advising at institution	11.2	9.23	—	—
Years teaching	17.2	9.91	—	—
Years advising	12.7	9.67	—	—
Male	—	—	57.9	128
Female	—	—	39.8	88
Rank				
Tenured	—	—	56.1	124
Nontenured, tenure track	—	—	33.5	74
Nontenure track	—	—	7.7	17
Other	—	—	2.7	6

Table 3 Time spent in advising meetings

	Percentage	n
Number of Advisee Meetings Per Year		
5 or more	21.6	47
3 4	52.1	113
1–2	26.3	57
Length of Advising Meetings (Minutes)		
30–60	15.4	34
15–30	73.3	162
Less than 15	11.3	25

Table 4 Comparison of means for information types received by faculty advisors, N = 185

		Organizational	Technical	Normative	Referent	Social	Political	Appraisal
Organizational	M = 7.06							
	SD = 2.16	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Technical	*M* = 6.42							
	SD = 2.02	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Normative	*M* = 5.97							
	SD = 2.16	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Referent	*M* = 5.32							
	SD = 1.90	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	No	No	Yes
Social	M = 5.29							
	SD = 1.93	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	—	No	Yes
Political	*M* = 5.10							
	SD = 2.28	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	—	Yes
Appraisal	*M* = 3.96							
	SD = 2.30	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—

Note. Yes indicates that the mean calculated is statistically different from the type to which it is compared.

ful for clarifying and elaborating on survey results, I completed the interviews with faculty members after I had analyzed the survey data. I E-mailed 30 of the faculty who had completed the interview-participation form to schedule a convenient interview time. I randomly selected faculty advisors from the returned forms; however, I attempted to solicit an equal number of men and women for the phone interviews. Through E-mail contact, I generated an interview pool of 19 faculty members. After completion of these interviews, 1 determined that additional interviews were not necessary because I was acquiring very little new information from each subsequent interview. Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to the phenomenon in which little can be gleaned from additional data as "theoretical saturation."

Of the 19 interview participants, 12 were male (63%) and 7 were female (37%). The four schools were nearly equally represented. Forty-two percent of the interview participants were new to their organizations: They had been employed there 3 or fewer years.

The average advisee load for this group of respondents was 28; the range was 8–109 advisees. Fifteen interviewees (79%) reported that they had participated in training sessions on advising at their respective institutions while 4 (21%) had not received training from their present employers. The interviewees reported that the predominant emphasis of the training sessions was on curriculum content and institutional policies related to course and graduation requirements. Although a majority of the interview participants had been involved in some kind of advisor training, 47% reported that their advising responsibilities had not always been clear to them or were never made clear during their entire tenure at the institution.

I transcribed the interviews and extensively read the transcripts to familiarize myself with the data set and to develop a coding scheme. I solicited a second coder to assess reliability for the category schemes and the agreement across coding categories for a correlation coefficient of 0.87.

Results

Types of Information Faculty Receive

Table 4 presents a comparison of the means for all seven types of advising-related information received by the faculty advisors under study. A within-subject ANOVA, using measures of the seven information types determined from the survey, demonstrated a strong effect for the amount of information received per the information types: $F(6,179) = 54.31$, $\eta^2 = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$.

I used paired-comparisons tests to look for specific differences between the types of information received. I found that respondents received more organizational information than any other type. Respondents also received more technical information than any other type (except organizational information). In addition, faculty advisors reported receiving more normative information than social, referent, or political information. I found no significant differences in the amount of social, referent, and political information they received. Faculty advisors in my study received less appraisal information than any other type.

Information Rated as *Useful* to the Role-Acquisition Process

Through the second research question, I explored the types of advising-role information that faculty respondents perceived as being useful. The results presented in Table 5 show the same pattern as did the responses related to the types of information received: Respondents identified organizational information as the most useful and appraisal information as the least useful. A within-subject ANOVA, using the seven measures of information types rated as useful by the respondents, demonstrated a strong effect for the usefulness of information received per the information types: $F(6,136) = 35.57$, $\eta^2 = .611$, $p < 0.001$.

I used paired-comparisons tests to examine specific differences between the usefulness of the types of information received. I found significant differences in the usefulness of several of the information types. Respondents rated organizational information as the most useful information type and rated technical information significantly more useful than all of the other information types (except organizational information). Thev identified normative information as being significantly more useful than referent, social, political, and appraisal information. They rated appraisal information significantly lower in usefulness than all of the other information types except political information. I found no significant differences in the usefulness rating of referent, social, and political information.

Some of the interviewees articulated a hierarchy of information usefulness by type. I also asked each participant if he or she would like to change anything about his or her role as an advisor, and 13 of the interviewees responded affirmatively. They offered 16 preferences for change, and of these, many addressed the acquisition of task-related information.

Three of the respondents (23%) articulated a need for more organizational information. Faculty advisors said that they needed more familiarity with curriculum requirements and institutional policies than they were currently receiving. One respondent explained the need for "a nice simplified list for professors so that we can appear knowledgeable about the whole curriculum in front of the

Table 5 Comparison of means for the usefulness of information received by faculty advisors, N = 142

		Organizational	Technical	Normative	Referent	Social	Political	Appraisal
Organizational	M = 6.83							
	SD = 2.1	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Technical	*M* = 6.58							
	SD = 2.05	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Normative	*M* = 5.8							
	SD = 2.27	Yes	Yes	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Referent	*M* = 5.42							
	SD = 2.05	Yes	Yes	Yes	—	No	No	Yes
Social	*M* = 5.4							
	SD = 2.03	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	—	No	Yes
Political	M = 5.0							
	SD = 2.25	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	—	No
Appraisal	*M* = 4.64							
	SD = 2.76	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	—

Note. Yes indicates that the calculated mean is statistically different from the one to which it is compared.

students." Another respondent indicated that clear information would be helpful because her understanding of the curriculum had been based on "flying-by-the-seat-of-my-pants learning."

The interviewees also expressed a need for technical information. Three respondents (23%) reported a need for more workshops and training programs related to advising and more ongoing communication with the on-campus advising office. Two interview participants (15%) addressed the need for more referent information. Interviewees spoke of the need for explicit explanation of others' expectations of them as advisors.

Sources in the Faculty Advisor's Role Set

In addition to learning about the kinds of information faculty receive about their advising responsibilities, I also sought to discover the sources of role-related information. Only 147 respondents indicated the sources that provided them with information related to the advising role. Table 6 presents the mean responses regarding each information source.

A within-subject ANOVA demonstrated a strong effect for the sources of advising-related information: $F(4, 143) = 119.07$, $\eta^2 = 0.77$, $p < 0.001$. Through pair-wise comparisons, I gathered some interesting information about advising sources.

Participants reported that "other" sources were providing the greatest amount of advising-related information to faculty advisors. (Comments of those phone interviews suggest that advising tenters are considered a key information source in the "other" category.) The mean difference between "others" as an information source and each of the alternative sources was statistically significant at the $p = 0.01$ level. The participants reported that advisees provided the least amount of advising information. The mean difference between advisees as a source of advising-related information and each of the other sources was statistically significant at the $p = 0.01$ level. The numbers of responses in which colleagues, deans/chairs, and "no source" were identified as sources of information were not statistically different from each other.

Although participants reported that advisees were often not a source of advising-related information, I found through interviews that faculty members receive explicit and implicit appraisal messages from advisees. Each of the advisors interviewed used formalized evaluations, but the methods used across the four schools were inconsistent. To better understand messages related to appraisal information, I asked participants in the phone interviews about the behaviors or remarks made by students that led the advisor to conclude that the student was satisfied or dissatisfied with their advising performances.

Based on my analysis of the interview data, I found that advisees gave appraisal information in the form of explicit and implicit feedback. Seventeen of the respondents indicated that they could identify when advisees were satisfied or dissatisfied with their performance. Eight respondents (47%) identified student feedback as explicit; they had experienced a clear positive or negative message from the advisee regarding the advisors' performances.

Four of the interviewees reported that they received various forms of positive feedback. For instance, students expressed gratitude for the advisor's help, provided a descriptive evaluation such as "you're a great advisor," compared the advisor's performance with that of a previous advisor, and informed the advisor that he or she had been recommended by another student, staff member, or faculty colleague. In addition, four of the interviewees reported that dissatisfied students were generally upfront about their feelings. Students will convey to their advisors that requirements had not been

Table 6 Means and standard deviations of sources for advising-related information, $N = 147$

		Other	Colleagues	Deans/Chairs	No Source	Advisee
Other	$M = 6.81$					
	$SD = 5.01$	—	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colleagues	$M = 3.84$					
	$SD = 4.26$	Yes	—	No	No	Yes
Deans/Chairs	$M = 3.42$					
	$SD = 4.18$	Yes	No	—	No	Yes
No Source	$M = 2.59$					
	$SD = 3.04$	Yes	No	No	—	Yes
Advisee	$M = 0.98$					
	$SD = 1.77$	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	—

Note. Yes indicates that the calculated mean is statistically different from the one to which it is compared.

made clear to them or they had not been informed of a policy. One advisor remarked that nontraditional students "do not suffer in silence or try to be subtle." The discomfort that can be associated with negative appraisals, especially for advisors new to the role, is illustrated in the following faculty member's recollection of a dissatisfied student:

> I remember just starting out 2 years ago. I was a rookie and someone comes in who didn't even have a schedule at all and flat out said, "I don't think I am being advised here," and that almost hurt.

In response to my questions regarding advisee appraisals, 41% of the interviewees discussed the implicit nature of advisee feedback. They reported that they monitor the students' nonverbal behaviors to gauge the effectiveness of the advising session. They interpret body language, such as shuffling of feet and lack of eye contact, manifested by gazes toward the door, as signs that the student is not completely satisfied with the advising session. In addition, these faculty advisors consider the length of the advising session and how well the conversation unfolds as clues to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. If the student appears to open up in the conversation and asks questions, then these advisors think that the student is pleased with the advising meeting. The respondents also think that students who schedule an additional meeting and attend appointments fully prepared are more likely to be satisfied with advising. Two respondents revealed that success is based on the extent that students get the schedule they want or receive a plan for handling scheduling dilemmas.

Discussion

The Importance and Usefulness of Advising-Related Information

Organizational information is a valuable component in the role-learning process for faculty advisors. Survey respondents said that they received more organizational information (policies and procedures related to advising as well as information on advising services and resources provided by the organization) than any other type of information, and they also rated this type of information as more useful than any other type. Technical information, the type of information that identifies how to perform specific aspects of the advising role as well as how to perform the role efficiently and effectively, closely followed organizational information in amount received and its usefulness.

One should not be surprised that faculty members receive higher levels of organizational and technical information than other types. According to Habley (1995), three general content areas can be addressed in training programs for faculty advisors: conceptual, informational, and relational skills. Habley (1995, p. 15) cited data from the 1993 American College Testing Program's Fourth National Survey of Academic Advising to reveal that "training in information *[defined as the things an advisor should know such as academic regulations, policies, registration procedures, etc.]* is still the primary content for training programs in academic departments while relational skills continue to be the least common component in training." In accordance with the trend noted by Habley, respondents in my study reported that they did not receive high amounts of social information (how to work with advisees), nor did they rate such information as highly useful.

Training planners may place minimal emphasis on social or relational information in faculty-advisor training programs because they assume that faculty members already possess the required skills to successfully manage relational dynamics with students. In addition, they may not have the time or resources to develop and implement comprehensive training programs that address conceptual, informational, and relational skills. Also, because they rated low these types of information, faculty advisors may simply be uninterested in training that addresses social or relational skills. In their investigation of faculty viewpoints on advising, Dillon and Fisher (2000, p. 20) concluded that faculty "are more focused on delivering correct information than in developing or improving interpersonal relationships with students." Advisors who participated in their study reported that knowledge is "more influential in establishing the student-advisor relationship than interpersonal characteristics such as courtesy, sincerity, being interested, and being accessible" (p. 20).

Faculty respondents to my survey received appraisal information less often than any other information type, and they rated it lowest in usefulness. Their responses may be due in part to the inconsistent use of formal evaluation procedures across their institutions. For instance, at one institution, advisees get an annual opportunity to rate their advisors' performances, but at another institution, they do not participate in any systematic evaluation of advising performance. The latter situation seems to represent more accurately the national trend in advising assessment. According to Kerr (2000, p. 351), "The evaluation of advisors is not much better than the training of advisors. Only 29

percent of faculty advisors are evaluated. Of this group, the predominant method of evaluation is either self-evaluation or student evaluation. Only 2 percent of these evaluations are done by peer review, and 12 percent are done by a supervisor." Because faculty advisors receive very little feedback on their advising performances, one should not be surprised that advisors rate appraisal information as low. However, interested researchers may wish to provide clarification about why appraisal information is not rated as useful by faculty advisors.

Information Sources

According to the quantitative data obtained through the survey, colleagues, deans, chairs, and students provided faculty members with most of the advising information they acquired. Many selected "other" when choosing the information-source category, which suggests that the advisors do not commonly discuss advising issues or responsibilities among their immediate work groups. Phone interviewees indicated that the campus advising center or office was often a source of advising-related information; however, I did not seek to clarify the frequency with which faculty actively solicited or received information from on-campus advising centers.

According to the survey data, advisees provide the least amount of information to faculty members regarding advising. This finding is not surprising. Students, especially new students, would not necessarily be informed about institutional policies related to performance standards or advising procedures, nor would they be knowledgeable about the philosophical view of academic advising that predominates at the institution. However, through interview data, I found that faculty advisors are keenly aware of the informal appraisal information provided by students in both verbal and nonverbal messages. These messages may yield a subtle yet influential force on advisor perceptions and role performances.

Limitations

The length of the survey instrument may create a possible limitation to the study. Because volunteers were asked to address 104 survey items, they may have experienced respondent fatigue. While I analyzed 221 surveys in the study, not all of the respondents answered the questions: 185 people answered all the questions on the seven information types; 142 addressed the usefulness of the information; and 147 answered questions about the sources of information.

Participants in the phone interviews were volunteers who were pleased that they served as faculty advisors. Faculty who may be dissatisfied with their advisor responsibilities may not have chosen to participate in the phone interviews.

The data are based on self-reports; as a consequence, I did not directly observe communication exchanges between faculty advisors and members of their role sets. The use of survey research has been an established method in the advising literature (McGillin, 2000); however, researchers do not have the opportunity to determine whether the advisors enact their advising responsibilities and communicate with others as they report in surveys.

When I asked survey respondents to identify sources of advising-related information, they chose among dean/chairs, colleagues, advisees, and other. I used this classification to learn more about the role of individuals within the advisor's immediate work group. I found that the "other" category was selected most often by the respondents to identify the primary source of their advisor-role information. I assumed that the advising office was the "other" source of information; however, survey respondents did not have an opportunity to define the sources that they identified as "other."

Implications for Future Research

The academic advising literature could benefit from an analysis of the role of appraisal information in the socialization process. Faculty advisors reported in the survey that they received less appraisal information than any other type related to the advising role; furthermore, they rated such information as lowest in usefulness. In an interesting finding, I discovered through interview data that they receive both explicit and implicit appraisal messages from advisees during advising sessions. I found no empirical evidence to suggest the extent that faculty members used formal or informal appraisal information from members of their role sets to shape their performances. Such information may aid in understanding why faculty members consider appraisal information low in usefulness.

Although the organizational communication literature provides evidence of the importance of supervisors and peers as important socialization agents, an examination of the role that clients (advisees) play in the socialization process appears to be warranted. Researchers must acknowledge that role learning may be significantly influenced by the communication exchanges taking place between advisors and advisees. Faculty interpretations of messages provided by students may not facilitate the type of role development that enhances the advis-

ing experience for the student, faculty advisor, or institution. To learn more about how advisee communication influences role learning and performance of faculty and full-time advisors, scholars should investigate the influence of students as socialization agents. The results of their studies may have implications for the content of advisor training programs.

An investigation of socialization processes could be extended to the experiences of full-time professional advisors. Much can be learned about the applicability of the seven information types to the role-learning needs of individuals whose primary responsibility is to work with advisees and other academic advisors.

Appendix A Scales used to measure information types (Adapted from Morrison, 1995)

Technical Information:
How to perform specific aspects of the advising role.
How to perform the advising role efficiently and effectively.

Referent Information:
Performance standards associated with the advising role.
The goals and objectives of one's advising role.

Social Information:
How to work with advisees.
How well one is getting along with advisees.

Appraisal Information:
Feedback identifying problems in one's performance as an advisor.
Feedback on how well one is performing as an advisor.

Normative Information:
The institution's philosophy and goals of academic advising.
Appropriate ways to behave and interact as an advisor.

Organizational Information:
Organizational policies and procedures on advising.
Information on advising services and resources provided by the organization.

Political Information:
Who has authority to shape advising practices in the organization?
Who makes the important decisions regarding academic advising in the organization?

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