

Academic Advising as Friendship

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We present a theoretical basis for engaging in academic advising as friendship and offer examples of the applicability of friendship in advising. We begin with interconnections between civic friendship and personal friendship in the context of academic advising. Next we overview theoretical work on communication and friendship that offers characteristics and ideals of friendship relevant to academic advising. Then we provide a dialectical framework describing six tensions that potentially emerge in the advising relationship viewed as a friendship. We argue that advisors and advisees must negotiate the tensions and benefits that potentially arise from practicing the academic advising relationship as friendship.

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Both the person asking for advice and the person giving it assume that they are bound together in friendship. Only friends can advise each other or, to put it another way, only a piece of advice that is meant in a friendly way has meaning for the person advised.

—Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989, p. 323)

The first author of this essay has advised undergraduate and graduate students as part of his responsibilities as a professor of communication since 1981, and the second has been a professional undergraduate academic advisor for over a decade. Based on our values, practices, and experiences as advisors, we agree wholeheartedly with the integral connection between advising and friendship observed by Gadamer (1989). Consequently, we offer here a theoretical basis for engaging in academic advising as friendship as well as examples of the applicability of friendship in advising.

We begin by discussing the interconnections we envision between political or civic friendship and dyadic or personal friendship in the context of academic advising. Next we provide a brief overview of theoretical work on communication and friendship, presenting characteristics and ideals of friendship relevant to academic advising. We then develop

a framework in which we describe six dialectical principles that potentially emerge in advising relationships when they are developed, practiced, and lived in a spirit of friendship. Throughout our theoretical discussion, we draw upon advising relationships we have experienced to illustrate how advisors and advisees must negotiate the challenges and benefits that potentially arise from practicing the academic advising relationship as one of friendship.

Dyadic Friendship, Civic Friendship, and Academic Advising

We believe that academic advising can and should occupy an evolving intersection between dyadic or personal friendship and civic or political friendship as defined by Aristotle (trans. 1980). When we mention friendship, we imagine that most readers are thinking of a personal, dyadic relationship, voluntarily chosen, based on mutual affection, respect, and loyalty, and emphasizing equality. Across the life course, persons expect their close friends to be individuals they can talk to, depend on in times of need, and enjoy (Rawlins, 1992). Aristotle's concept of civic or political friendship derives in part from this image of dyadic friendship with some important distinctions. First, while civic friendship emphasizes the affective quality of friendships, it is not affection primarily directed toward an exclusive or intimate attachment with another person (Hansot, 2000; Hutter, 1978). Rather, civic friendship is based on communicating goodwill and wishing the other well for his or her own sake (Aristotle). Second, like dyadic friendship, civic friendship involves more than this disposition to convey goodwill; it is active and it is practiced (Hansot, 2000). However, the hallmark practices of civic friendship are directed toward pursuing a common good, a worthwhile goal transcending the relationship itself, rather than principally emphasizing each individual's needs or desires.

In our opinion, academic advising relationships can incorporate aspects of both types of friendship in emerging and edifying ways. From their inception, most advising relationships are dyadic relationships personally focused on the well-being

of individual students. Meanwhile, the affection and caring in the advising friendship are not primarily aimed at developing a dyadic bond. They are more likely to be aimed at the creation of the active goodwill of civic friendship, directing participants' energies toward the ongoing accomplishment of a common good. In the case of the advising friendship, this common good involves the student's development as an informed, involved, and ethical participant in his or her own possibilities for learning, growth, and educational community as well as the world beyond. Facilitating such growth is the shared good desired by an academic advisor in each relationship with an advisee. The community of two created through the active participation and civic friendship of both advisor and advisee can open outward to include the advisee's family, friends and loved ones, other students, and other advisors. In some cases, over time, these sustained practices may establish the basis for a personal friendship between the advisor and advisee.

A Theoretical Approach to Communication, Friendship, and Academic Advising

Our theoretical approach is based on published work concerning the dialectics of communication and friendship (Rawlins, 1989, 1992, 2000, 2004). We emphasize that friendship, whether dyadic or community based, is always a communicative achievement. Persons must actively communicate with each other in ways that enact and sustain the possibility of friendship between them. In doing so, they embody and propose certain standards for the treatment of each other that must be met for the friendship to flourish.

Rawlins (1992) has identified five characteristics of dyadic friendship in North American culture that are present in all friendships but vary depending upon the circumstances of the friendship and on the closeness of the individuals involved. First, friendship is *voluntary*. You cannot compel people to be friends; you can only offer, model, or propose friendship to others. Although persons may be assigned to each other in advising relationships, whether and the degree to which they act as friends is both voluntary and negotiated. Not all advisors have the freedom, time, or comfort level to offer friendship to their advisees, and the unwillingness of any advisee to behave in a spirit of friendship must be respected. Although an advisee may reject the possibility of friendship, we can still address her or him with the goodwill and inclusiveness of civic friendship. Of course, as in all the practices described here, our actual ability to do so will

depend on specific cases and circumstances.

Second, friendship is *personal*. Friends are regarded and treated as particular individuals, not merely as occupants of roles or members of categories. Each student possesses a unique personality with distinctive strengths and weaknesses, interests, goals, and needs. Suttles (1970) referred to the "person-qua-person" orientation of friendship, which we regard as a fundamental stance of advising.

Third, friendship is *affective*. The affections of friendship range from a positive concern for the other's well-being to a heartfelt liking and even love for friends. In the advising context, the spirit of friendship mandates caring and concern for the well-being of students. In a violent, distracted, increasingly fast-paced and changing world, it is important for students to feel that somebody cares about their unique presence and possibilities in the educational institution. Enacting such caring and regard for learners is a vital activity of academic advising as friendship.

Fourth, friendship is *mutual*. People negotiate the friendship occurring between them. In civic friendship, a shared focus from the outset on the student's well-being, needs, and prospects establishes the possibility of mutual respect and regard developing between an advisor and advisee.

Fifth, friendship is *equal*. Despite personal attributes and social statuses that place persons in hierarchical relationships, friendship functions as a leveler. Friends search for ways and areas in their relationship to speak and treat each other as equals. For example, despite differences in knowledge and institutional status, the advising friendship aspires to equal input and responsibility in shaping the student's educational experience.

A dialectical perspective calls attention to the contradictory, interpenetrating, and changing aspects of advising situations, which are continually achieved through participants' praxis, their active choices shaping and responding to concrete conditions (Rawlins, 1989). Interaction in relationships generates and addresses multiple contradictions that emerge over time and in light of their position within enveloping social contexts. The existence of opposing demands means that certain tensions are common in advising relationships. In our discussion below we consider such tensions as subtle dilemmas that participants must manage effectively through praxis for advising relationships to remain viable as friendships (Rawlins, 1989).

Rawlins's theoretical account of communication and friendship describes six dialectical principles that pattern and reflect the dilemmas and practices of

communicating as friends (Rawlins, 1989, 1992). The Dialectic of the Ideal and the Real addresses how the abstract ideals and expectations of friendship and advising are realized within the constraints of concrete circumstances involving actual advisors and students. The Dialectic of the Private and the Public articulates the tensions produced as the experiences and behaviors of the advising friendship play out in both private and public realms. The Dialectic of the Freedom to be Independent and the Freedom to be Dependent concerns the degree and ways that freedom should be negotiated and exercised in advising students. The stance of friendship encourages students' freedom to grow and take risks while simultaneously preserving their option to depend on the advisor's knowledge and experience when needed. The Dialectic of Affection and Instrumentality formulates the issue of how much advisors should care personally for advisees and how much this caring can occur as an end in itself apart from the goals of educational guidance. The Dialectic of Judgment and Acceptance addresses the ongoing challenges involved in communicating acceptance, encouragement, and recognition of advisees as persons while fulfilling our responsibilities for candidly evaluating their plans and choices. Finally, the Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protectiveness acknowledges the tensions between encouraging the expression and disclosure of vital and tough truths with advisees while at the same time being respectful and discreet about their privacy or matters that might hurt or threaten them. Carefully managing these contradictory activities creates trust in both the honesty and discretion of an advisor.

The Dialectic of the Ideal and the Real

Conducting advising relationships in a spirit of friendship invokes a number of ideal orientations and benign connotations associated with civic and personal friendships in the Western tradition. These ideals include actively communicating goodwill toward advisees, pursuing a presumed common goal of enhancing students' possibilities and potentials, voluntarily extending the hand of friendship to each one, treating persons as individuals, caring about advisees, facilitating mutual contributions and benefits, and fostering equality in advising relationships. We believe that, taken together, they compose an edifying and affirming basis for our ongoing engagements with students. When these ideals encounter the realities of institutional constraints, however, it may be difficult to achieve or sustain a stance of friendship toward students. These constraints include a professional context of mounting

work responsibilities, increasing pressure for efficiency in "processing" students' needs, institutional or departmental cynicism, mock-corporate discourse in the academy that reduces advisors to "service providers" and students to "customers," or markedly reduced support for advising. Even so, we believe ideal aspirations motivate the best practices possible under limiting conditions. As Gandhi observed, "You must be the change you want to see in the world." Just as concrete constraints can inhibit what is best for students and advisors, behaving in light of edifying ideals can propose new realities. A dialectical perspective suggests the importance of maintaining a realistic perspective on what is achievable, so that advisors do not become discouraged by less than ideal occurrences.

There are also constraints associated with individual students' experiences with or expectations of advisors. Like all social relationships, academic advising involves both participants' expectations and behaviors. For example, for many students, the ideal advisor is someone who will tell them what courses they should take and what they need to do next. They may be only too happy to have an advisor who routinely E-mails them a slate of suggested courses for the coming term or semester. Such students may (at least initially) resent an advisor who insists on meeting face-to-face and who expects them to take initiative in making contact, raising questions, proposing possibilities for their plan of study and internships, discussing concerns, and taking action on the advisor's suggestions. They may at first resist a relationship premised on mutual responsibility for its success and working toward equal participation in cultivating its possibilities; these are ideal demands of advising as friendship that students may not appreciate. Their response may be, "Get real; just tell me what I need to take."

The advisor aspiring to the ideals of friendship may be disappointed by such student responses. From a dialectical perspective, the key for advisors is to remain attuned to the dialectical dance of friendship with each student; they need to ask, "How do friendship's idealistic practices and possibilities shape and respond to *this* student and circumstance?" The success of each advising friendship depends on the ongoing mutual negotiation of expectations set and expectations met.

The Dialectic of the Private and the Public

The Dialectic of the Private and the Public describes the tensions arising as friendships course in and out of private and public situations. Deciding to treat someone as a friend or to experience another's

actions as coming from a friend is a private decision made on an individual basis. You can encourage but you cannot compel anyone—be they students or advisors—to be friends with you or with anyone else. Behavior signifying friendship is determined across time between friends and is upheld principally by each individual's affection for or commitment to the other as a particular person. However, because all friendships also develop within enveloping socio-cultural contexts, the values and activities of the participants are subject to scrutiny from others. Both personal and civic friendships may develop during the activities of advising. Because advising relationships transpire within the parameters and policies of public institutions, third parties may perceive such friends as upholding or challenging accepted practices in their community. Consequently, all friends must continually reconcile the publicly stipulated and privately established standards used to evaluate the conduct of their friendship.

Numerous circumstances dramatize the public and private interweaving of academic advising pursued as friendship. One's own office can announce itself as a public space that acknowledges and welcomes advisees and is hospitable to civic friendship. For example, on a large bulletin board covering one half of a wall, the second author places articles and photos about her advisees from the campus and local newspapers. Sometimes a student has a baby or marries and offers a photo of the child or spouse, or an advisee brings her a poster or brochure developed during an internship experience. Students bring back business cards from their summer internships, and former advisees write letters and send business cards from their jobs, and in so doing, maintain contact after graduation. All of these items are posted on the bulletin board, and most advisees look at the bulletin board when they visit. As a result, the wall becomes a miniature public space, a basis for community appearance and shared recognition among advisees (Arendt, 1958). Everyone is invited; the space is not dyadic or personal; it celebrates personal achievements that are now open to public regard.

In a more personal vein, placed on shelves around our offices are cards, letters, and gifts from students. Having extended a caring, respectful, individualized advising relationship to each of them, some advisees choose to show their appreciation and caring back to their advisors. When students enter our offices, this mutual appreciation is a presence: like seeing a gift you have given to a friend displayed in his or her office or home. Transcending the present of the college years and including tokens from persons who have voluntarily maintained contact

after graduation, these artifacts exhibit both public and private accomplishments of students. They embody and announce to onlookers auspicious future possibilities stemming from personal, educational, and career choices made during the student's college years as well as the actuality of developing/developed friendships of advisees with their academic advisors.

One's office becomes a place for time spent in the encouragement and nurturing of advisees' unique qualities, aspirations, and potentials: a welcoming quasi-public space for students to grow and learn as individuals. With advisors and advisees face-to-face, the advising friendship moves beyond the business of registering, dropping and adding classes, and providing information about university policies and procedures. Conversation about substantive existential matters and choices (not just answering questions about procedures and regulations) is extremely important in developing the relationship. Such interaction may begin with participants addressing a small matter (e.g., a procedure or regulation) and end with them talking about career development, values, or personal concerns (e.g., depression, goals, getting an internship, relationships with parents or significant others). In this way, private issues and concerns course in and through meetings about publicly specified requirements.

Especially problematic is the privacy of confidences revealed by students in a spirit of friendship. Like a private friend who is also a public official, the advisor is both a caring individual and a university representative. An advisor does not pry, as one would not with one's friends. However, as a result of our efforts to create feelings of trust and mutual respect, students often confide in us because they view us as friends. Some of the confidences create conflict between the advisor's private and public roles, such as when one student revealed having been raped by her uncle, while another disclosed that a professor was stalking her. Sometimes students admit to us that they have drinking problems or that they have been engaging in illegal activities. If advisors are sworn to secrecy in each of these cases, they are unable to notify authorities or parents. Private and public expectations of confidentiality in the advising relationship exist as do our responsibilities to a university code of ethics. As concerned friends, however, we urge them to seek professional help and to protect themselves by sharing these secrets with their families or the proper authorities.

Advisors may also learn about plagiarism, cheating, missed deadlines for assignments, emotionally

depressed students, and disruptive behavior from either the student or from a faculty member. As a result, trusted advisors are in a unique position to mediate between students and faculty members in thorny situations, helping students to assume responsibility for their actions and to understand professional and personal standards of conduct. However, we must also accept that some of our students will make bad choices (e.g., fail to attend classes and study, work too much, get involved in troubled relationships, break regulations, or commit self-destructive acts), and they will have to face the consequences of those actions. It is ironic that such reluctant acceptance emerges from a stance of friendship. We further discuss this contradiction with regard to the Dialectics of the Freedom to be Independent and the Freedom to be Dependent, and of Judgment and Acceptance.

The Dialectic of the Freedom to be Independent and the Freedom to be Dependent

Friendship thrives on freedom and on cultivating the integrity of friends. In contrast to the possessiveness of romantic loving, which Sadler (1970, p. 186) once called "the freedom to be one," friendship promotes "the freedom to be two" and provides an encouraging space for developing individual identities. Friendship involves granting each other two freedoms (Rawlins, 1983). Although it may be unspoken, friends in effect say to each other, "You are free to live your own life and become the person you are meant to become" (the freedom to be independent), "but if you ever need me, feel free to call on me, and I will be there for you" (the freedom to be dependent). Granting each other these conjunctive freedoms serves distinctively to connect persons in a spirit of friendship (Rawlins, 1983, 1992), even within an advising relationship where persons may interact initially only because they have been assigned to each other. Of course, tensions may arise when individuals exercise their privilege of independence to the neglect of the other's opportunities to depend upon or to help them. Conversely, depending upon a friend too much may stifle her or his autonomy.

Some advisors enjoy the power of their position in students' lives. They reinforce their status by treating advisees in patronizing ways, making it difficult for students to see them, talking down to them, using standardized approaches, and giving little thought to their specific situations, or by subtly denying the validity of their perceptions, feelings, or questions. We consider these maneuvers inimical to the advising friendship.

Some students may want their advisor to serve as a parent and not a friend. Accordingly, they may adopt a one-down, childlike, and overly dependent stance. Accustomed to parents setting limits and monitoring their actions, some advisees expect advisors to tell them which classes to take, whether they should drop a class in which they are struggling, or even which major they should choose. For some freshmen in particular the academic advisor seems like a surrogate parent. Those students need many questions answered and more support to develop their confidence. While we do address their needs, we have increasing expectations of their independence as they adjust to the university and leave home.

Asymmetrical relationships may take other forms as well. Students may believe they have the right to impose themselves on advisors whenever and for whatever reason they see fit. Adopting the position, "You work for me," they reduce advising to a mere function or role in the university system. We do not accept this demeaning injunction from advisees, and we simultaneously resist keeping them in categorical relationships with us. This two-way respect is the path of friendship. Meanwhile, other advisees may believe that they know everything they need to know about being in college and view advisors as unnecessary, or at best, as a signature. While such independence implies that students have no desire or need for an advising relationship with us, which in some cases may be true, we still should touch base with these students, checking to see how they are doing as well as informing them of relevant resources and of our ongoing availability if or when they do need us. We remain there for them.

We acknowledge the paradoxical structure of this situation. It is an ironic quest to guide persons to independence or consciously to assume the unilateral initiative in establishing mutual freedoms to be dependent and to be independent. We require advisees' independent actions while offering ourselves as broad-based conversationalists interested in their welfare. We are interested in developing our advising relationship while equipping students for autonomy; balancing freedom and responsibility lives at the heart of this approach to advising as friendship. The equality part of friendship becomes easier to accomplish as students mature, and their growth allows our relationships with many of them to deepen.

A defining feature of friendship is spending time together when we are not required to (Rawlins, 1992). To cultivate the personal and voluntary aspect of her relationships with students, the sec-

ond author makes freshman check calls that go beyond registration and drop-add “encounters.” Advisors are required to meet with incoming freshmen during the summer but not to check on them after classes begin. When the students she calls are excited and don’t have problems, she and her advisees chat together about their initial college experiences. Taking time, talking, and showing interest extend the hand of friendship. They are tangible ways of showing concern for the advisee’s world and lived experience as a college student and learner.

Availability is an important issue in the advising relationship. If it isn’t a busy time and no other students are waiting, we sometimes talk with an advisee for an hour or more. Two kinds of accessibility are needed: physical and psychological. It can be difficult to sustain such accessibility during busy times like registration, when we might be booked with appointments for weeks in advance. When one is registering 10 or 11 students per day, one is challenged to maintain the emotional stance of particularized caring and goodwill every 30 minutes with another advisee and not allow the situation to become an assembly line. The necessity of staying on schedule is real, but the strict appointment structure becomes contextualized by our earlier relational development.

Even during the busiest times, our students know that if they have an emergency, need to talk, and cannot see us during tightly scheduled hours, we will make time for them. In turn, most of them respect our time and do not demand to see us during hectic times about trivial matters, and several have responded promptly when we have requested their help. Advisees—and friends—learn perspective taking and sensitivity to the other’s constraints. Mutually respecting each other’s needs for independence and dependence, friends work together through moments when ideal expectations grate against legitimate and real limitations.

Advising students while respecting their autonomy and self-formation occasionally involves encouraging them to take risks or pursue dreams that directly oppose their parents’ wishes. For example, the second author supported one advisee’s decision to move to Nashville and try to get a recording contract instead of the safer choice of accepting an entry-level position in advertising. There is no one right answer for advisees; listening and reflecting back each student’s ideas and responding to that person as an individual, and as a friend, is the key. There is immense variety in their values and goals and some of them have very different ideals and

ambitions than ours. However, the space created by civic friendship allows advisors to respect differences as well as wish students well as they pursue their own dreams (Arendt, 1958; Aristotle, trans. 1980).

The Dialectic of Affection and Instrumentality

The Dialectic of Affection and Instrumentality reflects the interplay between caring as an end in itself versus caring as a means to an end in the advising friendship. From both parties’ perspectives there are clear instrumental bases for advising interactions, and in accomplishing these tasks we can say that we have basically done our jobs. Meanwhile, a gratifying (if often demanding) aspect of our advising work is that it inherently involves the well-being and promise of another human being. Accordingly, embracing the stance of civic friendship, we wish each of our students well for his or her own sake and strive to serve the common good of effective advising. On a more personal level, we may come to care about many of our advisees as individuals as we get to know them better over time, and in some cases these relationships may become personal friendships. We believe this potential trajectory from civic to personal friendship is edifying though certainly not necessary for successful advising outcomes.

In every case, however, we believe in actively caring for and extending goodwill toward students as the basis for reaching out in friendship. The advisor’s affection for students dialectically serves as both an end in itself and the student’s well-being. Facilitating students’ habits of making good choices, developing self-respect, and learning to learn, for example, are worthwhile ends in themselves, but they are also fundamental instrumental goals of academic advising. Because our work has intrinsic values for students, it is difficult to decide where affection for affection’s sake leaves off and instrumental caring begins and vice versa. We can be recognizably better at what we do through helping others to accomplish their own educational and life goals. What a potentially humanizing enterprise!

However, tensions can arise despite this positive overlap in caring and achieving. It can be frustrating to care about students who aren’t excited about (or even disdain) being in college or utilizing our suggestions. Their lack of instrumental purpose or their indifference to our positive treatment may tax our regard for them as persons. Thus, we advisors must be mindful of being drawn only to our most conscientious, charming, or cooperative students. Some of our most conspicuous “failures” or

“underachievers” from an academic or career development standpoint may thrive in other ways or times and may benefit more from our sustained goodwill or interest in them than the more easily likable students. Although we may not initially (or ever) feel personally gratified by specific relationships, they are part of the community of civic friendship we aspire to create.

We also should keep in mind that instrumental activities serve advising relationships and can facilitate caring. We always follow up on student questions and concerns that we can’t answer immediately or refer them to another resource. Keeping meticulous notes of our meetings, though patently instrumental and a matter of public record, is also essential for discussing previously expressed concerns or interests during our next interaction. Although some details can be recalled without notes, these notes help us remember details about multiple persons’ lives. Pointedly asking questions that elicit information about advisees’ goals, preferences, fears, and interests; listening to their answers; and keeping records from which to refer back to those details of their personal lives help us to develop our relationships with advisees. Despite the instrumental and somewhat scripted nature of these questions, this activity engenders a particularized relationship with each student; it is not just the data entry of classes for the next semester or a review of requirements or procedures.

We make a point to know students’ names (how to pronounce them, what they want to be called, sight recognition), their family events, significant others, summer jobs, and extracurricular activities; these are the things that friends know. Our knowledge of the other is built out of regard for the whole person, not just the role she or he plays. It is both a practical matter and a matter of a caring stance.

Students may experience their advisor’s goodwill and caring in various ways. Many students deeply appreciate the comfort, warmth, and feelings of worth that are created in the advising relationship. As a result of feeling cared about, they may actually want to perform better at instrumental tasks so as not to disappoint their advisor. However, some may want only instrumental service from their advisor and view personal interest in them as an imposition. Other advisees may presume more closeness with us than actually exists in the relationship, which can result in expectations of mutual disclosure or invitations to events that we do not desire nor believe are appropriate. Advisors must therefore remain attentive to the ways in which each relationship is being defined and to any pos-

sibility that either our caring gestures or instrumental expectations are being misunderstood. In other cases, we must remember that many of our students are eager to help us, such as by writing letters of support for awards or returning to campus to make presentations, as a result of the affection they have developed for us.

We consider the most rewarding part of our careers as academic advisors to be developing long-term relationships with students during their time in college. Blending affection and instrumentality in diverse ways, such relationships benefit both parties, as well as the institution, impacting retention, academic performance, postgraduate opportunities, and personal satisfaction for students and for ourselves.

The Dialectic of Judgment and Acceptance

The Dialectic of Judgment and Acceptance animates crucial communicative dynamics of the advising friendship. On one hand, persons expect acceptance from their friends, the comforting affirmation of one’s decisions and actions. Friends see us in the ways we would like to be seen, and it feels good. On the other hand, we also rely on the frank judgments of our close friends because we employ certain standards in choosing our friends. We negotiate and share a set of values that we expect each other to live up to, and embracing these values together composes the moral fiber of friendship. If we cannot depend on our friends to set us straight when we are making mistakes with our lives, on whom can we depend? Consequently, considerable potential exists for tense moments when we rely on the same people for both unconditional positive regard (acceptance) and honest appraisal (judgment). The plot thickens when we consider Laing’s (1971) observation that it is rare for anyone to experience another person’s reactions to them as neutral. Consequently, persons tend to distinguish between judgmental and judicious reactions (Rawlins, 1992). Judicious comments are interpreted as motivated by caring and associated with friendship.

We want our advisees to experience our judgments concerning their behaviors, proposals, and choices as coming from a friend who cares about them and has their best interests in mind. And there will be judgments. For example, for registration appointments, the second author has developed a handout requiring the student’s preparation for the meeting. Many students fill out the form, but some freshmen arrive for their appointments unprepared. In those cases, she helps the student to fill out the form the first time. However, emphasizing judgment

over acceptance, she informs those students that if they come unprepared for future appointments, she will not register them, and they will have to make another appointment, by which time few class choices will remain. We know, and students soon realize, that proper preparation on both of our parts allows us time to discuss each class they are taking, new or continuing interests, summer plans, and to establish and check on individualized career-development goals. Such firmness in a friend's best interests can be called "compassionate objectivity" (Rawlins, 1992, p. 198), although we cannot control how each student experiences evaluation. Despite our best efforts at compassionate objectivity, students may still feel judged and criticized when we question their choices or actions.

Meanwhile, we foster mutual input in shaping advisees' educational experiences and career possibilities by modeling and encouraging a shift from one person judging the other person to the shared activity of judging together, which is considered the hallmark of civic friendship (Beiner, 1983). Following Gadamer (1989) and Aristotle (trans. 1980), we try to focus together on the ideas and issues at stake—the specific matter of the common good that is being shaped between us through the to and fro of our conversation—and not the individual person presenting the ideas. Over time we develop a shared sense of what we consider important and right for this student's unfolding possibilities, a common understanding that informs the moral values of our community of two. Judging together, we come up with plans, course selections, and ideas for dealing with roommates, group members, professors, or significant others that arise from our ongoing conversation not unilateral dictation.

In our view, the final responsibility for decisions always belongs to the student. The advisor, like a friend, cannot make those choices but can listen with an open, sympathetic ear; question the student's thinking about the matter; and support the final decision. This is what it means to live, address problems, judge, and celebrate together in friendship.

The Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protectiveness

The Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protectiveness addresses the contrasting tendencies to speak candidly with a friend and the simultaneous need to restrain one's comments to protect another's feelings and avoid burdening a friend. Persons become vulnerable in revealing sensitive information, and the responsibilities imposed on others not to misuse intimate knowledge of self make confidence and

trust problematic achievements. Each person must limit her or his own vulnerability and strive to protect the friend's sensitivities while expressing personally significant thoughts and feelings. Trust develops to the extent that friends manage the tension between expressiveness and protectiveness.

In cocreating the advising friendship through conversation, this dialectical principle potentially mediates all the tensions considered so far because it deals with how frankly yet respectfully we speak with each other. From our first interactions in advising, we need to speak openly about the broad array of matters at hand, which range from background information to current personal and academic circumstances and future plans, to the nature of our own advising relationship. We learn a lot about our advisees: sources of pride, disappointments, parental expectations and pressures, successes and failures in relationships, hopes, dreams, realistic and unrealistic images of themselves, and their possibilities. We learn even more if advisees trust us. Such trust is an ongoing and delicate achievement. On one hand, students may confide in us, and we in turn carefully listen to and willingly preserve their revelations. However, on other occasions we may need to be vigilant and honestly warn them in advance about matters we are required to report if revealed to us. We may try as well to curtail disclosures that could seriously jeopardize our good opinions of advisees. In other cases, we may need to protect ourselves by simply disallowing an advisee to burden us with disclosures that we are not willing to assume. Our discretion across situations reveals us as trustworthy.

Our advisees are always learning about us through how we respond to them. Occasionally students do not even realize the seriousness of a situation or feeling until they talk with us about it. Listening becomes a creative activity that helps advisees (as it can with friends) to know themselves through hearing themselves speak as well as witnessing our uptake (Rawlins, 2003). Of course, how much we disclose about ourselves through stories told and opinions rendered in conversations with advisees varies widely according to our professional judgment and the specific relationship. However, this Dialectic of Expressiveness and Protectiveness suggests that how we handle and address sensitive issues goes a long way toward establishing trust with advisees. The pinch is that they must be able to trust simultaneously in our honesty as well as our sensitivity to their vulnerabilities.

Telling students things they do not want to hear—they must change their major; graduation will

take longer than they had hoped; their career or post-graduate goals are unrealistic; their work schedule is interfering with their academic performance—are communicative challenges for advisors. For instance, changing to a less preferred major that is a more realistic fit with the student's skills, abilities, and interests before the student is in academic jeopardy can be an agonizing and easily delayed decision. In deciding how best to approach such a touchy topic, we try to balance the need we perceive for honesty with our simultaneous desire to protect students' feelings and vulnerabilities. When is the advisee ready and willing to hear tough truths and bear the responsibility? Timing, sensitivity, and the student's readiness are crucial for the advisee to regard the advisor as a caring, concerned friend and not as a controlling parent or bureaucrat. We must negotiate together on an ongoing basis the areas of conversation in which exercising restraint constitutes a basis for continuing trust and the topics for which candor affirms it.

Conclusion

We have presented an active stance toward advising students that judiciously blends civic and dyadic friendship and is informed by a dialectical perspective. We believe this theoretical conception is well suited to good practices in academic advising. To be sure, providing information, enforcing academic policies and school regulations, and functioning as resource persons are important aspects of advising. However it is the humanizing interaction, the reaching out of friendship, that we are speaking to here as a vital complement to all advising activities in serving the individual student as well as the mission of higher education.

We respond to the student's need for a sustained human connection with the institution during their college years (Beck & Young, 1978; Paul & Brier, 2001; Rawlins, 1992). The more we rely on technology in this increasingly bureaucratic world, the more we need truly interpersonal communication, conveying a feeling of belonging, of being recognized and treated as a unique individual. When students reflect on their university years, they remember people—friends, teachers, and significant others, such as academic advisors—who have made a difference in their lives.

Friendship is a generalized stance toward students that takes on its own specific forms and life with individual persons. Advising relationships are not static; they are subject to numerous contingencies, dialectical tensions, and concrete limitations of time and energy on the parts of both

participants. Like all communicative practices, they need to be conducted with sensitivity to cultural and subcultural differences. Even so, we have found that the respect and interest in the other's choices and possibilities embodied in the stance of civic friendship goes a long way toward creating hospitable conditions for diverse individuals to flourish.

To enact advising as friendship is to add a moral dimension to our activities with students, one that is negotiated with them. Initiating friendship is an additional responsibility as well as a burden and demand upon our time, energy, and emotions.

We reject the consumerist view of advising. We are not a commodity or mere service, and we refuse to think of our students as customers. We hold high expectations of our students and require that they share responsibility for our relationship. We expect our advisees and they likewise expect us to be prompt and prepared for our meetings, follow up reasonably on agreed upon actions, and treat the other with respect and consideration. Our advising philosophy aspires to developing student responsibility and initiative, listening to them and encouraging them as a friend would to follow their dreams and take steps to make those dreams a reality. Certainly not every advisee is as prompt or as responsive as we wish. Neither are our friends. We excuse their foibles as they forgive ours. We see our best selves reflected in their interest in our lives and in our dedication to theirs. We believe that, at its best, the advising relationship, based on mutual respect and interest and developed through conversation, is akin to friendship in substance and spirit.

The approach we have discussed here is not for everybody. There are potential practical and ethical objections to developing friendships in educational contexts that have been addressed in-depth in other essays (Jackson & Hagen, 2001; Rawlins, 2000). Sustaining an orientation toward advisees of dedicated goodwill, interest in their possibilities, and particularized caring and regard is demanding, as is negotiating the dialectical tensions that emerge with this stance. Such is the call of advising as friendship.

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