

From the Co-Editors: Reflecting on 30 Years of Growth and the Future

The *NACADA Journal* is devoting the majority of space in its 2009 issues to reflection on NACADA's evolution as an association and a field in higher education. This issue, 29(1), features reprints of articles spanning the existence of the *NACADA Journal*; dissertation abstracts from former NACADA Presidents, the evidence of which attests to NACADA leaders as scholar-researchers as well as practitioners; and book reviews that have helped advisors keep abreast of current thinking. This glance back at a sampling of the *Journal's* history should remind readers that NACADA's foundation has been built on exemplary scholarship with roots in practice, research, and theory.

In a January 2009 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Blumenstyk reported survey results showing the way in which over 200 public and private colleges and universities are initially responding to the challenges of the current economic crisis in the United States and throughout the world. Despite stated efforts to protect faculty and staff, 36% of these schools have already laid off employees or were considering doing so. In addition, "more than 40 percent said they had imposed partial freezes on faculty hiring, and nearly 60 percent had done so for other staff positions" (p. A14). As you read this column in late spring 2009, the economic situation for higher education has likely deteriorated from the precarious state that characterized the times in which we wrote this piece.

In this economic environment, significant pressure is placed on higher education leadership to make smart business decisions while maintaining educational quality, a difficult task even in stable economic times. The impact of these decisions on academic advising remains an open question, but one public university in our region employed a business consultant to review institutional processes and support services to increase efficiency and save money. One recommendation of the reviewer was to decrease the number of academic advising positions in lieu of an improved academic-progress tracking system and a simplification of the general education curriculum. While improvement and simplification efforts are most welcome, we find this "Sophie's Choice" type of decision (in the 1982 movie, actress Meryl Streep as Sophie is forced to choose which of her two children is sent to a Nazi concentration camp and which will remain with her) to be unacceptable and untenable.

Never has it been more important for advising

administrators, advisors, and friends of advising to marshal specific, significant reasons why academic advising positions should not be sacrificed and to advocate proactively the importance of academic advising with institutional decision makers. These reasons are many, and we offer the following two as a starter set for reflection and use:

1. *Students enter higher education without the benefit of adequate career guidance in the high school.* The American School Counselor Association (2009) noted that "in many states, students' access to counselors varies by grade level, and some school districts have no counseling programs at all. When counseling programs exist, counselors are often asked to add administrative duties such as testing, supervising and class scheduling." States, such as Pennsylvania, have adopted comprehensive K-12 initiatives, such as the Career Education and Work Standards Toolkit, as strategies to address this problem (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006), but the fruits of such efforts may be well in the future. To make a point about the importance of academic advising at our university (Kent State), we once asked a room full of 30 upper-level administrators "How many of you knew what you would be doing today when you were 18 years old and starting college?" Only one person raised his hand. How quickly the time goes; how soon we forget.
2. *Academic advising is a critical element in student persistence and success in higher education.* Unfortunately, no large-scale empirical research demonstrates the positive relationship between academic advising and student persistence. However, every advising practitioner can identify students for whom effective advising has made a difference in their lives. A collection of such critical incidents is powerful qualitative evidence for use in advocating the cause of advising. As Hunter and White (2004, p. 22) noted, "Academic advising, well developed and appropriately accessed, is perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students sustained interaction with a caring and concerned adult." It is the quality and quantity of these interactions that is the key to student persistence and success in higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Terry Kuhn & Gary Padak

To expand this starter set, we are interested in collecting additional reasons from NACADA members who read the *NACADA Journal*. Please submit responses to gpadak@kent.edu or tkuhn@kent.edu.

*Terry Kuhn
Gary Padak*

References

- American School Counselor Association. (2009). *Effectiveness of school counseling*. Retrieved February 7, 2009, from www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?pl=133&sl=241&contentid=241
- Blumenstyk, G. (2009). Colleges protect workers and cut elsewhere. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 55(18), A1, A14.
- Hunter, M. S., & White, E.R. (2004, March-April). Could fixing academic advising fix higher education? *About Campus*, 20–25.
- Pascarella, E., & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students (Vol. II): A third decade of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2006). *Career education and work (CEW) standards toolkit*. Retrieved February 7, 2009, from www.pacareerstandards.com/