

A National Survey of Academic-Advisor Job Satisfaction

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Presented analyses regarding academic-advisor job satisfaction are based on data from a survey administered to NACADA members in July 2005. Advisor job satisfaction in various environments and differences in satisfaction across personal demographics were studied. Academic advisors report high satisfaction overall as well as with student and supervision aspects of the job. Advisors are most satisfied with work variety, job benefits, and teamwork, and they are least satisfied with salary, recognition, and support for career opportunity. Environment variables most strongly related to job satisfaction were variety, empowerment, and teamwork. Advisors were least happy with the environment element of salary. Of the advisor variables, years of experience and advising style showed the strongest relationship with satisfaction.

KEY WORDS: administration, advising profession, NACADA survey of members, working environment, working with students, working with supervisors

Relative Emphasis: practice, research, theory

For many years, job satisfaction within the business world has been studied (Spector, 1997), but it has not been featured as a topic in the higher education literature until recently (Donnelly, 2004; Tarver, Canada, & Lim, 1999). Furthermore, literature on the job satisfaction of faculty or staff academic advisors is conspicuously lacking. To add to the body of needed academic-advisor job satisfaction research, I surveyed academic advisors to determine how work and personal variables might be related to their job satisfaction. Correlation was used to examine 9 environment (extrinsic) variables: individual empowerment, salary satisfaction, benefits, career opportunity, professional development, communication, variety of work responsibilities, teamwork, and recognition. Using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) and t-tests, I also measured 6 categorical environment variables (institution size, highest degree granted, institution type, advising model, geographic region, and the presence or absence of an advisor resource center) and 9 advisor (demographic) categorical variables (gender, amount of experience, full- or part-time status, education completed, advising role [full-time or faculty

advisor], advising style [prescriptive or developmental], completion of a counseling degree, advisor pay, and advisor age) to the self-reported job satisfaction of a sample of professional and faculty advisors who are members of NACADA. Survey respondents were asked about their job satisfaction in general as well as their satisfaction in working with students and with supervision.

In relative infancy, academic advising is developing as many other well-established professions have evolved (Hagen, 2005). Academic advising has achieved many of the same status-building characteristics, such as unifying theory, ethical codes, professional organizations, career viability, and a common culture, as evidenced in other fields; however, it lacks other hallmarks of prevailing professions, such as community sanction and authority over its members (Greenwood, 1957). The field will certainly mature as postsecondary institutions will continue to rely on academic advisors to help accomplish the primary institutional core mission of student success. As stated by Epps (2002, p. 85):

Institutions are concerned about their student retention rates and conduct research to determine ways to better retain their student population; however, these same institutions may not be addressing the issues of what may be a key factor in retaining students—academic advisors.

Statement of the Problem

Many advisors work in demanding, complex environments where job satisfaction can be threatened. Work-related stress contributes to the high attrition rate among student affairs administrators (Evans, 1988). Anderson, Guido-DiBrito, and Morrell (2000) found evidence to suggest that faculty members and administrators in higher education are less satisfied in their jobs than others in the general population. In addition, they found that women reported lower job satisfaction. Because significantly more women work in the advising profession (NACADA, 2000), those factors that uniquely influence the job satisfaction of women may have increased relevancy to advisors.

Definition of Job Satisfaction

Spector (1997) defined job satisfaction as a global variable or a constellation of facets to which

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the employee affectively responds. Job satisfaction can be understood as the way employees feel about their jobs, including the various aspects of the tasks involved. Spector identified a shift over the last 30 years in job satisfaction; it had been based on need fulfillment (e.g., a means of monetary support) and has transformed based on attitudinal variables. For example, employee engagement with or disassociation from their workplaces are now key variables in satisfaction measures.

Satisfaction that advisors report in working with students, called the “student facet,” is measured with question 8.7—“I find my interactions with students to be satisfying.” Satisfaction that advisors report in working with their supervisor, termed the “supervision facet,” is measured with question 8.8—“I’m content with the supervision I receive.” (See Appendix.) Response ratings from these questions are compared to each of the environment variables to show how satisfaction with the advisor’s environment might be affected differently according to the advisor’s satisfaction with supervision and students, both key work elements. If advisor job satisfaction is tied in some way to satisfaction in working with students, as shown strong correlations between satisfaction ratings, then this finding would add credence to the theoretical understanding of academic advisors as student centered, a central theme found throughout widely accepted standards and value statements, such as the Academic Advising Program CAS Standards and Guidelines (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2005) and the NACADA Core Values (National Academic Advising Association, 2005). Put another way, the more student centered the advisor, the greater their job satisfaction. Similarly, strong correlations between supervision and satisfaction ratings validate a central understanding of job satisfaction as tied to satisfaction with supervision. That is, the more an advisor is satisfied with their supervision, the better their satisfaction overall.

Academic-Advisor Job Satisfaction

Most of the research on the job satisfaction of those working in higher education has focused on faculty members (Adeyemo, 1989). It has been specifically concentrated on the teaching and research elements of the faculty role and not advising functions. Therefore, research on full-time advisor job satisfaction is limited. In 1995 Moser and Chong showed that increased role clarity led to job satisfaction among 123 academic advisors in a master’s of business administration (MBA) pro-

gram. In studying the quality of work life, Epps (2002) interviewed 18 academic advisors and found them to be generally satisfied with their work, particularly with regard to support from colleagues and supervisors, the variety of work performed, and the high level of autonomy associated with the job. The advisors in Epps’s study showed a high commitment to the job but were frustrated by feelings of occasionally letting students down.

The most recent nationwide NACADA member survey (2000) revealed segments of the academic advising profession who are satisfied or very satisfied in certain areas. Results showed that advisors are content with the direct-service advising workload (71%), advising related workload (61%), advisee load (54%), administrative workload (53%), institutional support (35%), and level to which advisor opinions are heeded (33%).

White (2004, p. 1) found that “an educational institution can become transformative in its organizational development when it supports classified staff in their professional and career development and includes them as partners in shared governance.” The majority of professional academic advisors work in unclassified jobs (University of Georgia, 2002), and some nonacademic advisor clerical staff—many of whom are in classified positions—also perform academic advising duties (Habley & Morales, 1998).

Participants

I administered a self-report questionnaire to 4,917 NACADA advisors who identify their primary role as advisor/counselor or faculty advisor. Data from 1,913 surveys were included in the analysis.

The typical survey respondent works under a satellite model (advising is provided in each of the academic subunits such as colleges or departments), within a public institution numbering between 10,000 and 20,000 students and offering degrees through the doctoral (PhD, EdD) and professional (MD, JD) level. They typically work in institutions that do not provide a resource center for advisors. By a small margin, survey respondents utilize a developmental style of advising (“let’s talk about your career/life goals”) as opposed to a prescriptive style (“here are the required courses for your major”). They have 3 to 6 years of experience and earn an annual salary between \$30,000 and \$34,999. They work full-time in the role of academic advisor/academic counselor, have a master’s degree, and are between 30 and 39 years of age. Most respondents are located in the Great Lakes Region

(IL, IN, MI, OH, WI, Ontario).

Instrumentation and Procedure

The *Survey of Advisor Satisfaction* (see Appendix) was supported by NACADA, which provided computer server space, survey system software, and technical support. The NACADA executive office sent participation invitations and reminders to members via E-mail.

Table 1 shows a summary of satisfaction ratings in regard to environment and satisfaction variables of advising. Strongly disagree/disagree ratings are combined and strongly agree/agree ratings were combined in the percent columns. Mean and standard deviation values were derived from the following scale: *strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *neutral* = 3, *agree* = 4, *strongly agree* = 5. The total number of cases for each variable in Table 1 ranges from 1,907 to 1,913.

Results

Correlation of Environment Variables with Satisfaction

As shown in Table 2, variety had the highest correlation, followed closely by empowerment, among environmental factors with regard to satisfaction. Teamwork was the third most highly correlated

variable with overall satisfaction. The strongest correlates to the student facet of satisfaction were variety, teamwork, and empowerment. Variables with significant correlations to satisfaction with the supervision elements of the job included communication, teamwork, empowerment, and variety. Pay was the only variable without a statistically significant correlation to satisfaction with the supervision and student aspects of the advisor job.

Satisfaction by Demographics

No significant difference was found on reported overall satisfaction between those working at institutions with an advising resource center and those working at institutions without such a center. However, the availability of an advising resource center seems to make a significant difference on advisor satisfaction with the student and supervision facets of their job. While the means show a statistically significant difference, any practical significance with regard to these findings is in question.

Work status has no bearing on job satisfaction. No significant difference was found on overall job satisfaction among those employed full- and part-time. The differences between satisfaction with student and supervision facets of the job were non-

Table 1 Frequency, mean, and standard deviation for environment and satisfaction variables

Item No.	Variables	“I am satisfied”		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
		% Disagree	% Agree		
Satisfaction Variables					
8.7	Student interaction	3	93	4.4	.73
8.9	Overall satisfaction	8	79	3.9	.88
8.10	Enjoys coming to work	9	76	3.9	.91
8.11	Will leave advising*	68	15	2.1	1.20
Environmental Variables					
8.6	Variety	10	78	3.9	.96
4.5	Benefits	12	74	3.8	.98
8.2	Teamwork	13	73	3.8	1.00
3.1	Empowerment	16	67	3.7	1.70
8.8	Supervision	19	63	3.6	1.10
4.3	Professional development	21	62	3.6	1.10
4.6	Career opportunity	26	49	3.3	1.10
4.1	Recognition	33	44	3.1	1.20
4.4	Salary	46	33	2.8	1.20

Note. Items and Likert scales can be read in the Appendix.

Disagree and strongly disagree as well as agree and strongly agree responses are combined under disagree and agree, respectively. Neutral ratings (not shown) account for the total being less than 100%. Mean and standard deviation refer to Likert scale responses.

*Reverse scored in calculation of job satisfaction grand mean

Table 2 Correlation of environment satisfaction variables with overall and facet satisfaction

Variables	Correlation with Overall Satisfaction	Correlation with Student Facet	Correlation with Supervision Facet
Age	.16	.15	.06
Benefits	.23	.14	.16
Career development	.37	.11	.38
Communication	.44	.17	.73
Empowerment	.54	.27	.46
Pay	.11	.02	.05
Professional development	.38	.18	.37
Recognition	.38	.15	.38
Salary	.30	.07	.20
Teamwork	.47	.28	.47
Variety	.55	.41	.39

Note. All r values greater than .06 are significant at $p \leq .01$ level (two-tailed). Scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neutral*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The variable salary is measured by responses to “my salary level is adequate” on a 1–5 Likert scale. The variable pay is measured with the 15 category options selected to the query regarding “current gross salary.”

significant with regard to employment status.

Job role does not seem to make a difference in satisfaction. Full-time advisors are no more satisfied than faculty advisors either overall or with regard to the student and supervision aspects of advising.

Gender has no bearing on satisfaction. Male and female advisors reported being equally satisfied overall and on the student and supervision elements of their job.

Differences in the means of satisfaction among those with differing advising styles were significant. Advisors using developmental approaches characterized their advising approach as “let’s talk about your career/life goals,” while those who use a prescriptive approach characterized their advising as “here are the required courses for your major.” Overall satisfaction for developmental advisors is higher than it is for those who use prescriptive advising. The data are also significant with regard to student and supervision aspects of satisfaction and advising style.

Advisors who hold a counseling degree do not have significantly higher overall job satisfaction than advisors without a counseling degree. Likewise, no significant difference exists among counselors and noncounselors with regard to handling the student aspects of advising.

Mixed results were found when considering the effect of institutional advising model. With regard to satisfaction overall and with student facets of the job, no significant difference was found; however, a significant difference was evident in terms of advising model and satisfaction with the supervi-

sion aspects of the job.

No significant differences were found in overall satisfaction, in the student facet, or supervision aspects among advisors who differ according to the type of institution that employs them. That is, overall satisfaction is the same for advisors working at public, private nonprofit, and proprietary for-profit institutions.

The hypothesis that advisor satisfaction differs among advisors working for institutions with differing missions was tested. Mission was defined by the highest academic degree offered. No significant differences on the satisfaction measures were found among advisors working for institutions of different types.

Significant differences were not found in overall or facet satisfaction based on the numbers of students enrolled in the institution at which the advisor is employed.

Advisors with more years of experience report significantly higher job satisfaction than those with fewer years of experience. For instance, those with 3 to 6 years experience reported a mean overall job satisfaction of 3.8 and for those with more than 15 years of experience the mean was 4.1. This is not an unexpected finding as advisors who are satisfied will tend to remain committed to advising as an occupation—perhaps even for different reasons than satisfaction—while those who are dissatisfied will tend to leave the field. In addition, as advisors become more experienced, their competence and enjoyment of the job may increase. In related research, Hagedorn (2000) found that for faculty members, the point in the

career cycle, defined by years until retirement, had an impact on job satisfaction. Novices derived satisfaction from the positive relationships with administration and interactions with students, midcareerists found satisfaction in appropriate compensation, and for disengagers, those anticipating retirement in 5 or fewer years, job satisfaction was best predicted through positive relationships with administration as well as appropriate compensation.

The amount of education completed appears to be related to overall job satisfaction. The 13 advisors whose highest earned diploma is an associate's degree ($M = 4.5$) expressed significantly higher overall satisfaction than did those with a bachelor's or higher degree.

A statistically significant difference was found by geographic region with regard to satisfaction with the student aspects of the job. Advisors working in the Northeast Region (CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT, Quebec, Atlantic Provinces) are less satisfied than are those working in the Pacific Region (CA, HI, NV). Measures of overall satisfaction and satisfaction with supervision were not significant.

Gap Analysis

The gap score is the difference between the importance and satisfaction rating of each factor. A positive difference reflects the unmet needs of the respondent. A negative difference score indicates that the factor does not need to be addressed to improve advisor experience.

Table 3 displays the importance-rating means and standard deviations. In the second column, the rating means and standard deviations of satisfaction ratings for each measured environment variable are presented. The gaps, or differences between

importance and satisfaction ratings, are shown in the third column.

Open Ended Responses

Qualitative analysis of data was completed for questions 9 and 10 (Appendix): "What one thing could make your job more satisfying?" and "What is one thing that gives you the most satisfaction on the job?"

According to 513 (27%) of the respondents, improved managerial and workplace conditions could make the job more satisfying. This result is evidenced in responses such as "better planning by supervisor; projects are often planned 'on the fly,'" "less top down leadership from managers who are not sufficiently versed in advising theory and philosophy," and "stable environment as we have experienced may changes of the past few years [*sic*]. I wish upper-level decision makers would visit with us to know the day-to-day operation so decisions would not adversely affect students."

Responses from 354 advisors (19%) indicated that salary and advancement opportunities would improve their satisfaction. Their responses included items similar to these examples: "better pay to match responsibilities," "higher pay commensurate with level of education required," and "being well paid enough that I didn't need a second job."

Lower advisee ratio and a need for more time available for work with students were articulated in responses from 239 advisers (13%). Such responses included, "I'd like more in depth [*sic*] work with students, especially those at risk. Currently, I am the one full-time professional in a university of over 7,000 students." Another respondent explained: "Less work. I love my job; there's just too much of it! We have double the assigned advising loads and projects from when I started 8 years ago. This

Table 3 Correlation of importance-satisfaction gap with overall satisfaction

Variable	Importance		Satisfaction		Gap		Correlation
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Empowerment	4.4	.79	3.7	1.10	.67	1.20	-.40*
Variety	4.4	.77	3.9	.96	.46	1.00	-.35*
Communication	4.2	.88	3.5	1.10	.63	1.30	-.30*
Career opportunity	4.1	.92	3.3	1.10	.86	1.40	-.29*
Recognition	4.0	.83	3.1	1.20	.87	1.40	-.28*
Professional development	4.5	.69	3.6	1.10	.91	1.30	-.27*
Teamwork	4.1	.78	3.8	.99	.34	1.10	-.27*
Salary	4.0	.82	2.8	1.20	1.3	1.50	-.23*
Benefits	4.1	.79	3.8	.98	.31	1.10	-.11

Note. * Significant at the $p \leq .01$ level (two tailed).

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weighs heavy toward burnout.” Another explained, “Having a smaller caseload so more time for individual meetings with students to help develop total programs of study.”

Responses from 187 advisors (10%) indicate that recognition, reward, and respect top the list of needs. Comments that support this conclusion include “recognition by our college that I am a professional with a degree in my field and not just ‘staff’ that is an afterthought.” Another asked for “more respect from ‘real’ faculty and administrators. Although we are non-tenure faculty, we are not treated like other faculty; even library non-tenure faculty receive more respect.” The following also epitomizes a call for greater credit: “appreciation for my, and my department’s, extra efforts, creativity and contributions to the quality of the institution.”

Responses from 127 advisors (8%), which were summarized by M. Miller (personal communication, August 19, 2005) indicate that diversity would lead to greater job satisfaction: “A greater variety of work/more challenging tasks” typifies the responses as does “more responsibility or room for growth” and “working on more collaborative projects with department staff”

A theme of student centeredness emerges in the responses about the aspect of the job from which advisors enjoy the most satisfaction. Some form of the word *student* was mentioned 1,664 times in 1,913 responses. Representative comments included “interaction with students” and “knowing that I make a difference in the lives of our students.” Others articulated their student centeredness as follows: “Advising and working with students give me the most job satisfaction,” “I enjoy working with the staff and faculty at my institution, but the students are the most satisfying aspect of my job,” “I know that the work I do is critical to student success and development. As far as job satisfaction, I equate it to a six-figure salary.”

The word *help* was found 460 times in the responses and was usually in close proximity to a mention of students, as in “helping them discover themselves and being able to help them in their educational endeavor is most important.” Some form of the word *goal* was written in 170 responses, as in “to watch students mature academically and socially during their journey toward career and life goals.” These open-ended responses are consistent with quantitative data derived from other survey responses. Therefore, the results indicate that advisors rate highest those aspects of their job that involve working with students.

Major Generalizations, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

Overall Satisfaction

The most obvious overarching generalization revealed by survey findings, as shown by both average ratings and frequencies of responses, is that academic advisors are mostly satisfied with their jobs. Seventy-nine percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied overall (8% indicate dissatisfaction and 13% gave neutral responses), 76% enjoy coming to work, and 68% are not planning to leave advising as a line of work. The 8% dissatisfaction rating indicates a slight decrease in overall dissatisfaction from Bender’s 1980 research, which indicated that 18% of those in student affairs reported job dissatisfaction.

These findings add to data from the most recent NACADA member survey (2000), which showed that approximately one half of members surveyed are satisfied with their advisee load, 70% are happy with their direct advising workload, 50% are pleased with their administrative work, 30% are satisfied that their opinion is being heard, and 34% indicate they have institutional support.

The three variables showing the strongest correlation with overall satisfaction were variety, empowerment, and teamwork (Table 2). These findings agree with those obtained in a qualitative study by Epps (2002), who found that advisors are generally satisfied with their work but particularly satisfied with support from colleagues and supervisors, the variety of work performed, and the high level of autonomy provided.

To place overall job satisfaction in the context of satisfaction data from all fields of work, I looked at a 2004 AP/Ipsos poll, which indicated that one half of Americans were ready to get back to work after the Labor Day holiday and see their work as an important part of their life and identity. They generally enjoy their coworkers, find their work interesting, and feel they are paid fairly (AP/Ipsos, 2004).

The Student Facet

Advisors rated their work with students (student facet of satisfaction) higher than overall job satisfaction. Ninety-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I find my interactions with students to be satisfying,” while 3% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the remaining provided neutral responses. These results were more favorable than those offered for the supervisor facet, for which 63% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I’m content with the

supervision I receive.” Satisfaction with the student facet was also higher than overall satisfaction, for which 79% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “overall, I am satisfied with my job.”

The three strongest correlates with the student facet of satisfaction were variety, teamwork, and empowerment, the same three variables showing the highest correlation with overall satisfaction (Table 2). This finding is important because it supports the general understanding of advisors as student centered (not institution or rule centered) in their approach to their work.

Satisfaction in working with students was a major finding by Epps (2002, p. 87), who found that “the ability to work with students in some capacity emerged as the primary reason the participants liked advising. They liked the contact with college students and the ability to interact with students one-on-one, helping them or guiding them through their academic careers.”

The Supervisor Facet

A majority of respondents (63%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are content with the supervision they receive. Variables most strongly associated with the supervisor facet include communication with supervisor, teamwork, and empowerment (Table 2).

Impact of Environment

Variety. As evidenced both in ratings means and frequencies (Table 1), advisors are highly satisfied with the variety of work that they have the opportunity to perform. In addition to advising, their duties include teaching, project work, and committee participation. Satisfaction with variety of work was the most highly correlated with overall satisfaction.

The smallest gaps between importance and satisfaction were found with benefits, teamwork, and variety (Table 3). A small importance-satisfaction gap indicates that while advisors find these job elements important, they are also satisfied in these areas. While smaller gaps indicate areas of strength for advisors individually and advising as a field or profession generally, larger gaps, such as those for career opportunity, professional development, salary, and recognition, show areas needing focused attention, especially by institutions employing advisors. Correlation data show that the importance-satisfaction gap for empowerment and for variety have the strongest negative relationships with overall satisfaction. That is, advisors who consider empowerment and variety to be important and who are also

dissatisfied in these job areas seem to be dissatisfied overall in their work.

Advisors’ open-ended responses are consistent with the quantitative ratings. In replying to the question about an aspect of the job that could be more satisfying, 127 (7%) indicated that duty diversity would lead to greater job fulfillment. Some typical comments included “a greater variety of work/more challenging tasks,” “more responsibility or room for growth,” “other responsibilities and to be supported to pursue opportunities outside of job description (e.g., advising a student organization, teaching, presenting, etc.)” Because task variety has a positive relationship with overall as well as student and supervision facets of job satisfaction, advising administrators should consider ways to bring more heterogeneity to the position. However, they need to understand that while advisors value differing aspects of the job, any variety introduced should not result in larger advising loads. Being overwhelmed with large numbers of students was an area of concern expressed by 26% of advisors responding to the NACADA (2000) survey: They said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their advisee load.

Empowerment. In the context of this study, *empowerment* refers to the authority to make significant decisions on behalf of the institution when working with students. Empowerment satisfaction was measured with the question “I am satisfied with the amount of empowerment I experience.” Among environmental factors, advisors ranked empowerment fourth (behind variety, benefits, and teamwork) (Table 1). As illustrated in a high correlation with overall job satisfaction, those who perceive their organizations as empowering also report higher overall and supervising-facet job satisfaction. The importance of empowerment to advisors is consistent with a dominant theme, coded as “managerial and workplace issues,” found among responses to the open-ended question regarding steps that could make the job more satisfying (Appendix, question 9).

Responses relating to supervision, leadership, and decision making comprised 514 (27%) responses; 8 respondents used the word *empowerment* specifically. The desire for more empowerment is echoed in the most recent NACADA member survey in which over 44% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the extent to which their opinions were being heard (NACADA, 2000).

Communication. A strong relationship was shown in correlations between supervisory communication and overall job satisfaction. The

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strongest correlation of any predictor variable was found between satisfaction ratings of communication with the supervisor and the supervision facet. Role theory provides an explanation for this finding: Clear supervisor communication of roles (i.e., role clarity) regarding work expectations is seen as a primary predictor of job satisfaction, and role ambiguity is a primary detractor (Abramis, 1994). The results from this study are consistent with those found among academic advisors in an MBA program (Moser & Chong, 1995).

Teamwork. A large proportion of advisors are satisfied with the amount and quality of teamwork on the job. Following variety and empowerment, teamwork was among the top three variables that correlate with overall job satisfaction (Table 2), and it was second to communication in terms of relationship strength with the supervision facet of satisfaction.

Salary and benefits. An interesting dichotomy exists between the two compensation variables, salary and benefits. Satisfaction with salary was rated the lowest of any variable while satisfaction with benefits was rated relatively high. Neither salary nor benefits showed a high correlation with overall satisfaction and they held the lowest and second lowest position among correlated predictor variables. However, the gap scores reveal a possible reason for the disparity among the variable ratings. The salary variable produced the highest importance-satisfaction gap, while benefits produced the lowest (Table 3). This result suggests that advisors' need for benefits are being met better than any other environment variable, while their salary needs are the most poorly met of any other variable. Open-ended responses support this conclusion: 354 (19%) of responses to the question "what one thing could make your job more satisfying?" fit under the salary/advancement category, which was the coding category with the second largest number of responses (after managerial and workplace issues).

That salary does not correlate well with satisfaction can be explained using Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) theory that one unique set of job elements, called "motivators," contribute to job satisfaction, while a different set of job elements, called "hygienes," lead to job dissatisfaction. Following the theory, the absence of salary satisfaction does not reduce job satisfaction, but low salary satisfaction may lead to job dissatisfaction.

Professional development, career opportunity, and recognition. Professional development, career opportunity, and recognition are related employee

support mechanisms and are therefore discussed together. Twenty-one percent of advisors disagreed or strongly disagreed that their institution was supportive of professional development (62% agreed or strongly agreed; 17% gave neutral ratings). The satisfaction finding is higher than Sofranko's (2004) result of 42% of advisors who agreed that their professional development needs were being addressed. Career opportunity was rated lowest of these three variables, with 26% in agreement that their career opportunity is sufficiently supported, 49% in disagreement, and 25% who neither agreed nor disagreed.

Recent research has uncovered advisor reward and recognition as an area in need of improvement (Epps, 2002; Habley, 2004; Sofranko, 2004). Findings from this study concur with past research, indicating that for many respondents formal recognition is offered infrequently. However, respondents appear split on this issue: 33% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 44% agreed or strongly agreed with the survey question "my contributions are formally recognized." Perhaps this indicates the start of an encouraging upward trend toward greater amounts of reward for, and recognition of, advisors.

Correlations with overall job satisfaction were found to be remarkably similar among the professional development, career opportunity, and recognition variables. All were in the .37–.38 range, which is moderate to high in comparison to other variables. NACADA members have been found to value professional development highly (Sofranko, 2004).

Advising resources. An advising resource center serves as a support for the advising program as a whole as well as for individual advisor professional development, but it is not designed for direct service to students. Examples of such resources have been implemented at the University of Arizona (www.advising.arizona.edu) and the University of Cincinnati (www.uc.edu/advising). The effect on job satisfaction of a resource center was measured by comparing the satisfaction of the 279 respondents (15%) reporting the existence of a center at their institution to those without this resource. While significant differences on overall and student facet satisfaction were not found among those who have access to a resource center, a significant difference was found on measurements of the supervision aspect of satisfaction. Perhaps professional development activities offered by these centers target skills that impact the relationships of advisors with their supervisors more than other aspects of the job.

However, other, unidentified characteristics common to the relatively few institutions that offer such a center may be the cause of relatively greater advisor satisfaction with supervision aspects of their jobs. For example, institutions that can afford to offer an advising resource center may also hire more advisors, thus increasing the time that advisors can spend with each student.

Impact of Advisor Variables

The survey asked respondents to self-report their advising style as prescriptive, which is characterized by “here are the required courses for your major,” or developmental, described as “let’s talk about your career/life goals.” Those reporting a developmental style are more satisfied overall and with the student and supervision facets of the job. The developmental approach to advising is clearly more student centered than is the prescriptive style, which is more rule centered. Because student centeredness characterizes the work of advisors, it makes sense that a student centered approach will also be more satisfying. This finding needs to be considered with regard to the current priorities of most advisor training programs, which place emphasis on prescriptive elements of advising (e.g., the sharing of factual information) while leaving out developmental aspects (e.g., such as listening and interviewing skills) (Habley, 2004; Habley & Morales, 1998).

Discussion

What can advising administrators do to create an optimal advising environment? To be successful, academic advisors must be provided a workplace that encourages satisfaction. Managers who offer a climate that empowers advisors to make important decisions, provides opportunities for them to be challenged with a variety of tasks, and orients accomplishing tasks via teamwork and who clearly communicate roles and responsibilities will see advisors flourish as they support the mission of the institution in which they work.

Advising administrators play a vital role on behalf of the institution in creating environments that give advisors job satisfaction. For example, with regard to role clarity, Moser and Chong (1995) recommended that advisors be encouraged to clearly understand their jobs, receive good training, and emphasize the interpersonal nature of the work while de-emphasizing technical aspects of it. An advising administrator, as a full-time director of a center or an academic department head, whether supervising full-time staff or faculty members who

have advising as part of their responsibilities, has the opportunity to create an ideal advising atmosphere.

Sometimes a combination of environment variables is necessary to create the optimal advising context. For example, advisors who are given the opportunity to perform a variety of tasks are likely empowered by their organization to complete these heterogeneous jobs. Because the stakeholders demonstrate trust in him or her, the advisor feels a sense of confidence, which then leads to a sense of overall satisfaction. Advisors working within a nonempowering atmosphere rate their job satisfaction lower than do their peers.

The case study is an effective way for new and seasoned advisors to establish competent decision-making abilities. Because authority is shared in this approach, the outcomes are as consistent as possible for students. Case studies aid advisors in improving human-relations and problem-solving skills, and they can be used as exemplars of carefully defined problems, providing opportunities for analyzing advising situations (Koring, 2003).

Advising administrators must challenge themselves to reflect upon the advising environment to determine the impact on those who work there. Are professional relationships conducive to teamwork when needed? Is the advising administrator willing to share authority, when appropriate, with front-line advisors to make important decisions in assisting students? Is he or she communicating clear expectations regarding the role of the advisor and challenging the advisor by balancing the direct-service advising workload with a variety of duties such as committee involvement or teaching responsibilities? In addition to an environment conducive to satisfaction, advising administrators can also provide professional development opportunities that prepare the advisor for new roles as empowered decision maker, team member, or multitasker.

These recommendations are consistent with those of others who have studied the job satisfaction of higher education employees. For example, Anderson et al. (2000) called for restructuring the work environment (e.g., with provisions for job sharing and ensuring the communication of realistic job expectations) to improve unacceptably high attrition rates due to low job satisfaction among higher education professionals.

What can advisors do to ensure their own job satisfaction? Findings from this study suggest that specific components of work relate to job satisfaction. Advisors can reflect upon their work and then seek out those work activities and conditions that have the possibility of increasing their happi-

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ness on the job. For example, advisors might want to consider the amount of time they spend on non-advising professional activities such as project or committee work. If they find an imbalance, they might pursue activities to reestablish equilibrium in their work lives.

Despite the understanding of advising as an individual enterprise, advisors might try a teamwork approach to accomplish tasks. These survey findings show that teamwork is related to job satisfaction. To improve their own contentment, advisors might consider breaking out of the traditional advising paradigm by employing teams in their work.

Because unclear or ambiguous supervisor communication regarding the advisor's role is related to lower job satisfaction, regular dialogue with managers or department heads is imperative for advisors. To communicate effectively, advisors and advising administrators need to be aware of potential barriers. For example, considerations important to effective communication, such as privacy, safety, work station efficiency, and student traffic flow, have been priorities in the design of effective advising offices (Miller, 2003). However, in the 2000 NACADA member survey, 34% of advisors rated their office space as inadequate or quite inadequate.

Data indicate that those advisors who espouse a developmental approach to their work with students report significantly higher satisfaction than those who use a prescriptive approach. Based on this finding, advisors should reflect upon their advising style—a self-assessment is a good place to start—and consider how it moves them toward an approach grounded in student development theory. Advisors can improve their developmental-advising skills by keeping current on their student development knowledge and sharpening their listening skills.

Conclusions

Findings in this study add credence to the idea, borrowed from the industrial and organizational psychology tradition, that the environment plays an important role in the satisfaction of the employee. Alongside the psychotherapeutic and the health care conventions, where the goal is increasing employees' ability to cope mentally or physically with their environment (Beehr, 1995), the industrial and organizational psychology approach could be quite valuable in improving advisor job satisfaction.

If they value advisor job satisfaction and want academic advising to benefit the advisor and the institution as a whole, organizational stakeholders, including managers, must create supportive environments. That is, workplaces must be char-

acterized by variety, empowerment (authority), and teamwork as well as clear communication channels between the manager/supervisor and advisor.

Unlike benefits, salary, and the presence of a resource center, which are under the auspices of institutional-level administration, variety, empowerment, teamwork, and clear communication are all controlled at the unit level. Therefore, the unit or resource center manager (or department head) should be considered an indispensable component in creating environments conducive to advisor satisfaction.

Suggestions for Future Research

The variables showing very strong correlation with job satisfaction in this study provide good bases for further study. The design of a new study should control for variables that correlate with lower satisfaction, such as advising load, to eliminate the possibility that such variables are masking the effects of other variables. This study was limited to the environment (extrinsic) and advisor (demographic) factors that relate to job satisfaction. An example of an intrinsic factor common to advisors, which came to light in this study and which had been reported elsewhere (Epps, 2002), is a feeling of satisfaction an advisor experiences when students are successful.

Two of the five predominant causal models in the literature, need fulfillment and discrepancy (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2006), guided this study. More research should be conducted to explore the remaining three models: fulfillment of work values, equity or fairness of treatment, and dispositional components. In addition, future researchers can test whether advisor job satisfaction is connected to student success and satisfaction.

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Appendix Survey of advisor satisfaction

Item Number and Question	Response Choices
1. Select the advising model(s) which describe(s) your institution's approach to advising students (check more than one if appropriate).	TOTAL INTAKE – one office or advising center handles all advising for incoming students until certain criteria are met such as declaring a major SATELLITE – advising is provided in each of the academic subunits such as a college or department SHARED – faculty advisor for the major and a generalist advisor handles advising on issues outside the major (e.g., policy and procedure) FACULTY ONLY – faculty advisor in the department handles all advising PROFESSIONAL STAFF ONLY – a professional advisor handles all advising
2. Does your campus offer a central institution-wide advising resource center for advisors, one that is not designed to advise students directly?	Yes No
Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about <i>your advising unit</i> (e.g., college, department, advising center):	
3.1 I am satisfied with the amount of empowerment I experience	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
3.2 Being empowered on the job is important to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
3.3 Clear direction from my supervisor or department head is important to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
3.4 Communication from my department head or supervisor is sufficiently clear	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Appendix Survey of advisor satisfaction (continued)

Item Number and Question	Response Choices
Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about your institution as a whole:	
4.1 My contributions are formally recognized	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.2 Adequate opportunity for job/career promotion within my institution is important to me	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.3 My professional development is sufficiently supported	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.4 My salary level is adequate	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.5 My benefits (e.g., medical, dental, vacation) are adequate	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.6 My career development [opportunity] is sufficiently supported by my institution	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.7 Professional development is important to me	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.8 Salary level is an important contributor to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

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Appendix Survey of advisor satisfaction (continued)

Item Number and Question	Response Choices
4.9 Benefits (e.g., medical, dental, vacation) are important contributors to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4.10 Being formally recognized for my contributions is important to me	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
5. The size of your institution	Less than 2,500 2,500 – 4,999 5,000 – 9,999 10,000 – 19,999 20,000 – 29,999 30,000 – 39,999 more than 40,000 Not applicable
6. The highest degree granted by your institution*	Technical (vocational) certificate Associate's degree Bachelor's degree Master's degree Specialist Ph.D., Ed.D., or professional degrees, e.g., M.D., J.D., D.D.S., etc. Not applicable
7. Your institution would best be described as *	Public Private (nonprofit) Proprietary (for profit) I am employed by an agency or firm and my primary income is not from an institution of higher education Not currently employed
Questions about your satisfaction Indicate your agreement or disagreement with these statements about your satisfaction:	
8.1 Working with students is important to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Appendix Survey of advisor satisfaction (continued)

Item Number and Question	Response Choices
8.2 I'm happy with the amount of teamwork involved in my work	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.3. Having a variety of responsibilities (e.g., advising, special projects, committees, teaching) is important to me	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.4 Having effective supervision is important to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.5 Working with colleagues as a team is important to my satisfaction	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.6 I am satisfied with the level of variety in my work (e.g., advising, projects, committees, teaching)	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.7 I find my interactions with students to be satisfying	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.8 I'm content with the supervision I receive	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.9 Overall, I am satisfied with my job	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

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Appendix Survey of advisor satisfaction (continued)

Item Number and Question	Response Choices
8.10 I enjoy coming to work each day	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8.11 I am looking for a job outside of advising	1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
9. What one thing could make your job more satisfying?	[fill in the blank]
10. What is one thing that gives you the most satisfaction on the job?	[fill in the blank]
11. Which statement comes closest to describing the focus of your typical advising interview?	A. Let's talk about your career/life goals B. Here are the required courses for your major
12. How long have you held a position similar to your current one? (e.g., you may have advised in your current position for 2 years, but you were a full-time advisor at another institution for 5 years; therefore, you have been a full-time advisor for 7 years. Mark "at least 6 years but less than 10 years.")*	Less than 3 years At least 3 years but less than 6 years At least 6 years but less than 10 years At least 10 years but less than 15 years 15 or more years
13. Your current gross salary*	Under \$20,000 \$20,000–\$24,999 \$25,000–\$29,999 \$30,000–\$34,999 \$35,000–\$39,999 \$40,000–\$44,999 \$45,000–\$49,999 \$50,000–\$54,999 \$55,000–\$59,999 \$60,000–\$64,999 \$65,000–\$69,999 \$70,000–\$79,999 \$80,000–\$89,999 \$90,000–\$99,999 \$100,000 and above
14. Work status	Full-time, part-time

Appendix Survey of advisor satisfaction (continued)

Item Number and Question	Response Choices
15. Highest degree you have earned*	Associate's Bachelor's Master's Educational Specialist Ph.D. or Ed.D. or equivalent Other:
16. Do you have a counseling degree?	Yes No
17. Your gender*	A. Male B. Female
18. Your age*	Under 22 22–29 30–39 40–49 50–59 60–69 70 and over
19. Your geographic region*	Northeast Region (ME, VT, NY, NH, MA, RI, CT, Quebec, New Brunswick, Maritime provinces) Mid-Atlantic (PA, NJ, DE, MD, VA, DC) Mid-South (WV, KY, TN, NC, SC) Southeast (MS, AL, GA, FL, Caribbean) Great Lakes (WI, IL, MI, IN, OH, Ontario) North Central (NE, IA, SD, ND, MN, MT, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) South Central (KS, MO, OK, AR, TX, LA) Northwest (AK, WA, OR, ID, MT, British Columbia, Alberta) Pacific (CA, NV, HI) Rocky Mountain (AZ, CO, NM, UT, WY) International (other than Canada)
20. Which of the following best describes your primary role at your institution?*	Faculty Advisor Academic Advisor/Counselor Advising Administrator Administrator with responsibilities over several areas, one of which is advising Graduate student Institutional position that supports advising— Registrar, admissions, financial aid, technology specialist, office assistant, etc. Affiliated with a college or university but not in any of the roles previously mentioned Not affiliated with an institution of higher education

Note. Asterisk (*) indicates questions provided by NACADA.