

From the President and Executive Director: Welcome to the Celebration!

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the celebration! By reading this issue of the *NACADA Journal* you make yourself part of NACADA's 30th birthday party. It is a wonderful time not only to reflect on the development of higher education and the progress academic advising has made in the last 30 years, but to try to anticipate the opportunities and challenges the academic advising community might face in the next 30 years.

The remarkable growth of NACADA's membership, conference participation, and publications is ample testament to the fact that the organization has been meeting student as well as advisor needs over its brief history. That testament suggests that it should continue to meet those needs. NACADA will know when it is meeting student needs by assessing its efforts and by being clear about the advising objectives at the programmatic, advisor, and individual student levels. Such assessment will spawn answers to the perennial question "do we make a difference?" and such inquiry will provide a basis for research publication.

In meeting student needs, academic advisors should be open to new opportunities for expanded roles and expectations. This could mean increased collaborations across colleges, units, departments, or even institutions. Such collaborations could foster the advising provided for students and the professional development advisors provide for each other. Such collaborations could come about because participants can combine expertise for either effectiveness or efficiency. Many types of advising can go hand in hand. Academic advising, career advising, financial advising, personal counseling, and academic support are all areas that might be closer knit in the fabric woven by advising and teaching. New insights about advisors' work might spring up like wildflowers, be a reaction to diminishing resources, or grow from a carefully articulated vision. In any event, those in the academic advising profession must stay alert to the potential generated by collaboration of practice with other professionals.

How will NACADA know if it is meeting the needs of advisors? One way is to ask them through surveys and another way is to watch attendance at various conference events. Whether the tremendous growth in membership, conference attendance, and publications will be sustained into the

future is an open question; however, NACADA is quickly acquiring the technological resources and know-how to deliver in-service sessions via the Internet and the telephone network as well as through publications and the NACADA Web site. Technology, both known and to be learned, will likely play a big role in how it meets the needs of advisors. While bringing faculty advisors to conferences that are not in their teaching and research disciplines is difficult, NACADA may be able to engage them in Webinars, phone conferences, and other technology-based events that allow them to stay on campus and participate with only a few hours of invested time.

At several national conference sessions, advisors have described their own lack of research expertise to design and conduct research inquiries and then to write and publish results from such activities. At the same time, they are committed to learning about research and theory and see value in that activity both for themselves and for the developing knowledge base in academic advising. One way to move the research agenda forward in academic advising is collaboration with faculty members who have the expertise but need to be invited to focus it on academic advising. Advisors should invite faculty members to join them in conducting studies. What better combination could there be than a practicing advisor who has ideas about topics that need to be researched and a faculty researcher who has the design, statistical, and writing skills to produce quality research? Advisors need to break the ice to form collaborations so they can pursue the research agenda posted on the NACADA Research Committee's Web page (www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Research_Related/research_agenda.htm).

One result from such collaboration could be the creation of a praxis of academic advising in which theory, research, and practice all contribute to reflective practice. In this way, the academic advising community would become more intentional in utilizing the research available and in conducting new research that demonstrates the essence and efficacy of academic advising. Advisor-faculty collaboration may be one way to achieve this enhanced use and production of advising research.

To foster this increased promotion, participation, and publication of research in academic advising, NACADA must increase its support of research

and scholarly inquiry through continued strengthening of the *NACADA Journal*, as well as by increasing its support of research grants and scholarships, and providing guidance for those in the field who are involved in research. In addition, NACADA needs to encourage academic advising and campus-wide administrators to support advisors' involvement in research and publication activities.

Like the academic disciplines, academic advising must be accountable for the investment that higher education is making in it. Advisors should expect to show how they contribute to the success of students in achieving academic success, including improved retention and graduation rates. However, they must beware of keeping students at their own institutions when the advisees' needs might be better served by programs at other institutions. They need to be accountable for the academic success of individual students as well as to institutional retention and graduation rates. As a famous author once said: Everything is first, but some things are more first than others. In the world of academic advising, individual students must be more first. Sitting on the front lines of academe, academic advisors are often considered the "face of the institution," and they must take advantage of that position as they help students.

NACADA must provide leadership for the continued development of academic advising on a global as well as a national scale. Today NACADA has members from over 25 countries, and involvement in the association of international members is increasing through such opportunities as international conferences and other overseas connections. The *NACADA Journal* is beginning to receive manuscript submissions from researchers in other countries. A global interest in academic advising, personal tutoring, and career development is forming. NACADA's leaders and members will continue to take responsibility for including international members in professional development activities, publications, research, and leadership opportunities.

Even though the United States has recently elected its first African American president, all academic advisors will need enhanced skills and knowledge for working with students and colleagues from differing backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, religious beliefs, and sexual orientations. Institutions must be proactive and committed to providing professional development that ameliorates biases that advisors may have so that all students can be positively affected by their advising experiences. All institutions need to hire advisors from a

variety of backgrounds to maintain a diverse advising staff.

The future of academic advising is going to be greatly impacted by technology. We predict that as younger professionals enter the advising community, they will bring with them the skills and understanding of new technologies. Even as the field of academic advising has been transformed by the personal computer and degree audit systems, NACADA, colleges, and universities must continue to explore new technologies and to utilize those technologies to enhance the academic and advising experiences of students. Just as importantly, the advising community must actively explore how technologies can be utilized to provide professional development for advisors. For instance, during periods of limited funding in the future, NACADA may use webcasts, podcasts, DVD training programs, and electronic resources in the NACADA Clearinghouse to deliver quality professional development.

So what will the next 30 years hold? While no one can know that with certainty, NACADA needs to have a firm commitment to follow its agenda and achieve the goals that have been set forth. Staying the course in this way will keep the association moving in a good direction. As an association, NACADA is poised to continue providing professional development opportunities and support for those participating in research and scholarly inquiry activities. Achieving success for NACADA will also require each individual advisor to provide a welcoming environment in which advisees feel that advisors are enhancing the value—real and perceived—that they gain from their education. With advisors' collective commitment to students and institutions, the future of academic advising is bright, and NACADA will work through any challenges, budgetary or otherwise, to achieve its long-term goals.

As we write this, the country is in the midst of a global economic downturn. State and university budgets are being impacted and there may be long-term effects from the current financial woes. However, there will always be students who want to get a college education. So, while there may be a train in the tunnel, let's be sure we are riding on the engine and using its headlight to guide us.

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