

This publication
is available
in microform.

University Microfilms
International

Please send additional information

Name _____
Institution _____
Street _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

300 North Zeeb Road
Dept. PB
Ann Arbor, MI 48106
U.S.A.

30-32 Mortimer Street
Dept. PB
London W1M 7BA
England

Student and Faculty Expectations of Academic Advising

MAX D. LARSEN, *Professor of Mathematics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.*
BONNIE BROWN, *Assistant Professor of Spanish, Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.*

INTRODUCTION

Academic advising involves the **interaction** of faculty and **students** in quest of the best **possible** decisions about students' academic programs. Each **has important** contributions to make to the process. **The** faculty **member** brings experience, knowledge about the university, and an **understanding** of the **discipline** or profession. The student wants access to that **knowledge** and to the faculty member when making **decisions** about **his/her** academic **program**. How **well** this **process** works depends upon how well each participant—faculty member and **student**—**meets his/her** obligation, **and** upon the **quality** of the personal **interaction between** the two individuals.

What is **expected** of an academic advisor? What is **the student's responsibility** in the advising **process**? **Is there** agreement on **the** part of either participant **about perceptions** and expectations of **the other**? **Answers** to these questions are the key to interpreting and understanding the **successes** and **failures** of **this important** aspect of our educational system. **For example**, if students expect something from the advising **process** which advisors do not **expect** to provide, then the chances of achieving positive **results** may **not** be good.

Only one **quarter** (25%) of the **respondents** to the national **survey** on academic advising conducted by ACT¹ acknowledged **the** existence of a **published statement** regarding the **institution's academic** advising system. It is **suspected** that many of those do not contain a clear **statement** of what is expected of students and of **faculty advisors** as participants in the process. **Bostaph** and Moore² summarized quite effectively **recently** published results **on** the advisor's role in the advising process and **the** various **functions** of academic advising. **Hazleton** and Tuttle³ outlined in general terms what **was expected** of the advising process but did not list specific **responsibilities**.

¹Carstensen, Donald J. and Constance Silberhorn, "Final Report: A National Survey of Academic Advising," (American College Testing Program, Iowa City, Iowa, 1979).

²Bostaph, Charles and Mart Moore, "Training Academic Advisors: A Developmental Strategy," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21 (1980), 45-49.

³Hazleton, V. i and George E. Tuttle, "Performance Appraisal: A new Model f a Academic Advisement," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 22 (1981), 13-18.

Various ways of viewing academic advising were summarized by Gordon,¹ but again the issue of specific expected actions was not addressed. Hornbuckle, Mahoney, and Borgard reported that student perceptions of faculty advising are relatively undifferentiated and students tend to evaluate advising more on the basis of interpersonal skills than on the technical functions of advising.² These results point to the need for a clearly written, well-understood statement which outlines the specific actions that are expected to occur in the advising process.

In order to address questions about perceptions and expectations of the advising function, a questionnaire was administered to faculty and students in colleges of arts and sciences of four midwestern universities. Faculty and students were given identical lists of activities which might be expected of students and of faculty. They were asked to register agreement or disagreement using the following seven point scale by circling a number:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion

Observations regarding comparisons of faculty and student responses to items in the questionnaire were made by considering the percent indicating "strongly agree" and by considering the "cumulative agreement" attained by summing the percent of respondents circling 1, 2, or 3.

Respondents were reminded of the following restrictions in the advising process:

- the amount of time available.
- the number of students assigned to each advisor,
- the students' extracurricular interests and activities, and
- the uncertainty on the part of some students about future goals, etc.

They were asked to rate the functions and activities of the advising process by taking these restrictions into account.

Questionnaires were sent to 1367 faculty members from the University of Wyoming, Mankato State University, Kansas State University, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Usable responses were obtained from 541 for a response rate of 40%. For the purpose of cross tabular comparisons, the faculty population can be subdivided into Chairs (and heads) of departments, Advisors including faculty who have major responsibility for advising or coordinating advising, and Faculty consisting of the remainder of the professorial staff. Note that in the summary to follow "Faculty" refers to this category while "faculty" refers to the entire population. Responses are used from 49 Chairs, 97 Advisors, and 395 Faculty for subgroup response rates of 62%, 60%, and 35%.

¹Gordon, Virginia, "Training Academic Advisors: Content and Method," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21 (1980), 334-339.

²Hornbuckle, Phyllis A., John Mahoney, and John H. Borgard, "A Structural Analysis of Student Perceptions of Faculty Advising," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 20 (1979), 296-300.

Questionnaires were distributed to 2550 students from the University of Wyoming and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; 649 usable responses were received, a return rate of 25%. The student population includes 107 juniors (JR), 385 freshmen who have declared a major (DF), and 157 freshmen who have not declared a major (UF). The response rates from these three subgroups were 11%, 36%, and 32% respectively. (The questionnaire used in this study may be obtained from the author. Editor.)

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

Is it appropriate for academic advisors to assist students with finding solutions to personal problems? Seventy-eight percent of the faculty responding concurred that academic advisors should provide help with the resolution of personal problems, possibly through referral to other university agencies such as the counseling or health centers, while 61.0% of the students agreed (see Table I). Both groups agreed that students should discuss personal anxieties and concerns with the advisor.

Cross tabulations show that Advisors considered the obligation to provide assistance with the resolution of students' personal problems more critical than did Faculty or Chairs; however, the latter expressed the strongest agreement that students should discuss personal problems with an advisor. There was variation across categories in advisee attitudes about the question, for which Juniors' expectations were much lower than either Freshman category.

Table I
Expectations Regarding Solution of Personal Problems

	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	Strongly Agree	Cumulative Agreement	Strongly Agree	Cumulative Agreement
AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO:				
Assist in solving personal problems	15.4	61.0	23.0	78.0
Facilitate interaction with bureaucracy	16.5	66.7	24.7	78.4
A STUDENT SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO:				
Discuss personal anxieties with advisor	16.5	67.5	12.0	71.8
Make his/her own decisions	60.1	96.4	77.8	98.5

On a related item 78.4% of faculty thought advisors should facilitate students' interaction with bureaucracy while only 66.7% of students thought so. There was strong agreement between both faculty and students that students should be able (with good advice) to make their own decisions and accept responsibility for them.

If academic advisors are going to respond effectively to student needs regarding solution of personal problems, advisor training programs and handbooks should include information concerning when and how to refer severe personal problems to professionally trained counselors. Likewise, students should have access to decision-making workshops, especially as freshmen, if they find it difficult to accept responsibility for making decisions.

INFORMATION ON EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

An important issue in defining the **responsibilities** of an academic advisor is the extent and scope to which he/she should be able to provide information to advisees. The survey showed that the advisor **should refer them** to the major tools of the discipline, such as standard bibliographies, etc., and to major events such as conferences, workshops, etc. Cross tabulations show that Juniors **felt** more strongly than Freshmen that this **information should** be provided.

Students and faculty agreed that being able to answer questions (possibly through referral) regarding financial aid and part-time employment is a **reasonable expectation**. If appropriate materials were prepared and distributed to advisors by campus financial-aid and employment offices, they could accomplish this task with minimum time and effort.

Table III
Expectations Regarding Supplying Information Regarding Extracurricular Activities

	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	Strongly Agree	Cumulative Agreement	Strongly Agree	Cumulative Agreement
AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO:				
Refer students to the tools of discipline	17.8	73.3	22.7	79.2
Answer questions about financial aid	34.5	86.6	30.1	79.5
Inform students about campus activities	10.6	54.0	3.4	31.1
AS STUDENTS SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO:				
Ask advisor about campus activities	36.2	87.9	12.2	66.0
Learn about extracurricular activities on own	19.1	69.5	57.5	91.8

Three items dealt with information about extracurricular activities. It was agreed by 31.1% of the faculty and 54.0% of the students that an academic advisor should inform students about various campus activities such as student government, football tickets, concerts, etc. In addition, 66.0% of the faculty and 87.9% of the students indicated that a student should ask the advisor about extracurricular activities that would provide good college experiences. The significant percentages of advisees who perceived their academic advisor as a logical source for information about out-of-class activities indicates two things—students do not have adequate information about such activities and they consider them part of their overall education. Students' expectations of the advisor as a source of information about extracurricular activities exceed what faculty members plan to provide. However, 69.5% of the students and 91.8% of the faculty agreed that students should learn about extracurricular activities on their own and not hold academic advisors totally responsible for providing this information.

The administration should develop ways that information about campus and college-wide activities can be provided to students without involving advisors except to answer a question occasionally. Information about discipline-related activities must be considered a

departmental responsibility, but not necessarily that of an individual advisor. Acknowledging that students, especially juniors, want notices and descriptions of academic out-of-class activities, departments can help meet some of their needs by publicizing events through bulletin boards, classroom announcements, and possibly a newsletter to majors. Student honoraries and clubs within the discipline provide another good resource for distribution of such information.

REALIZING STUDENT POTENTIAL

What are the separate and joint responsibilities of advisor and advisee in planning a course of study that matches a student's abilities and interests with courses and programs? There was strong agreement by both parties that a student should be willing to

- 1) consider enrolling in courses recommended by the advisor even if they exceed the minimal requirements
- 2) assess, with help, his/her own efforts and to make plans consonant with that assessment, and
- 3) outline secondary interests that he/she would like to expand or improve.

These items indicate that an academic advisor should assist the student in planning an academic program which is consistent with the student's abilities and interests. In contrast, however, one item stated that the academic advisor should insist that the student take more demanding courses than the minimum requirements if he/she is capable (75.6% of the faculty and 66.8% of the students responding agreed with this item).

MECHANICS OF ADVISING

The specific responsibilities of advisor and advisee dealing with the mechanics of advising were relatively noncontroversial. Both groups agreed on the following items:

- An academic advisor should
- answer questions regarding requirements,
 - recommend courses outside the major,
 - provide letters of recommendation for graduate school,
 - be knowledgeable about university resources, and
 - keep regular office hours.
- A student should
- select an individual course from advisor's list,
 - research specific content of course that sounds interesting,
 - fill out own forms,
 - call advisor for appointment unless office hours are posted,
 - initiate advisor contact, and
 - be able to choose or change advisors.

It is not surprising that faculty and students found agreement with these items, but note, only 85.6% of the students felt that advisees should fill out their own forms, and only

83.7% felt that a student should select an individual course the advisor had listed. Maybe, by establishing **statements** of responsibilities for advisees and advisors, they would (**hopefully**) eliminate frustration for students who agree with the minority about these two items.

Table III
Expectations Regarding Contacting Advisees

	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	Strongly Agree	Cumulative Agreement	Strongly Agree	Cumulative Agreement
AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO:				
Take the initiative to inform students of office hours	38.6	82.5	38.5	69.1
Take the initiative to seek out students who fail to consult with the advisor	12.9	48.4	5.1	38.4

Table III shows the frequency distribution of two items dealing with advisors contacting advisees. Ninety percent of the students thought that advisors should inform students of office hours. However, only 69.1% of the faculty agreed that this was a faculty responsibility, but advisors who would inform students recorded a higher percentage of agreement than Faculty or Chairs. Thirty-six and four-tenths percent of the faculty and 48.4% of the students agreed that advisors should take the initiative to seek out students who fail to consult with them. Agreement from Chairs was higher than Faculty, and agreement from advisors was lower, reflecting the time and effort which would be involved. Juniors (JR) expressed less agreement with this item than did either Freshmen subgroup.

Although there was no mandate to include either of these items in listing of advisor responsibilities, a sufficient number of respondents agreed that more thought should be given to the matter of contacting advisees. It should be possible to develop an automated procedure for notifying students of advisors' office hours and contacting students who do not contact their advisors. For example, advisor-advisee assignments for an entire college or department could be kept current on a word processor and used at least once a year to send advisees:

1. notification of office hours and other pertinent information.
2. relevant information about academic out-of-classroom activities.
3. a routine letter if they fail to consult with an advisor.
4. notification of appropriate activities and events (providing faculty advisors collected interest profiles regarding secondary interests and coded the student's file).

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

What should an advisor be expected to do after completing an advisee's academic program? Once a plan is approved jointly, is the burden totally on the student or is there a role for the advisor? The survey revealed strong agreement that a student should confide in the advisor when course work problems occur. A faculty advisor should, it was agreed,

Student and Faculty Expectations

- monitor advisees progress toward educational goals
- help the student analyze performance in course work and capitalize on strengths and weaknesses, and
- assist in evaluation and improvement of study skills.

Only 32.9% of faculty thought an academic advisor should visit with instructors regarding a student's progress, whereas 54.3% of the students felt such a step should be taken. The mixed response could be a result of different interpretations of the question. Apparently visiting with instructors was not seen as monitoring progress toward educational goals. On the other hand, within the context of a student having described course work problems to the advisor, visiting with the instructor is something the advisor might be expected to do. The interpretations and implications of this item must be clarified before incorporating it, or something like it, into a statement of advising responsibilities. Cross tabulation results show that advisors have less agreement with this latter item than do Faculty or Chairs, presumably because they recognize the additional work that would be required to accomplish it.

Academic advisors are often adept at helping students with study skills, but formal evaluation of and instruction for improvement of study skills by a centralized professional facility would complement the faculty members' efforts. Details of how to refer students for help and how to identify students who need attention in this area should be included in advising workshops and handbooks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has documented a significant amount of agreement between faculty and students regarding the responsibilities of each in advising. It has discovered some disagreements about certain items. Each institution should establish and distribute, using appropriate faculty and student participation, a formal statement identifying the specific expectations of advisees and advisors. Doing so would undoubtedly improve the advising process. Student services not presently provided because the obligation to do so is unclear, should soon become available.

Central support services should be developed to implement and carry out the institution's agreed upon responsibilities. In particular, the institution needs to develop an automatic system to track advisees and, with a minimal amount of effort on the part of the advisor, to contact students by mail to announce office hours, meetings, and special extracurricular activities.

In order to relieve both academic advisor and student of the responsibility for keeping track of details like fulfilling degree requirements, a computer should be used to provide an up-to-date summary of the completed academic program.