

From the Co-Editors

To many, academic advising is practice; to others, academic advising is theory. Some conduct research in academic advising, and who can forget assessment in this higher education climate? Advising involves all of these endeavors and more.

Because effective advising begins with consideration of the best possible outcome for the student in mind, we first direct readers to the final article by Keith Powers, Aaron Carlstrom, and Ken Hughey, who provide results of a survey on assessment practices for academic advising of undergraduates. Fortunately, their data show a self-reported increase in assessment practices; unfortunately, assessment of academic advising is still in its infancy and is conducted at a minority of postsecondary institutions. This leads us to emphasize that regardless of the theoretical perspective embraced, the delivery mode for advising used, the student populations advised, the technology adopted, or any other aspects of academic advising practice and services, assessment is absolutely necessary to determine the effectiveness of the advising program (Robbins, 2011; Robbins & Adams, 2013; Robbins & Zarges, 2011).

Returning to the consideration of theory, we acknowledge that academic advising as a field and discipline is unique with no overarching theory in the traditional sense (Hagen & Jordan, 2008). Rather, practitioners utilize a plethora of theories from fields such as (but not restricted to) education, counseling, human development, psychology, sociology, hermeneutics, and others. In this issue, Hilleary Himes builds upon the advising literature focused on theory to discuss the continuing need for a concerted consideration and creation of a single interdisciplinary-inspired theory for academic advising. She encourages identification and exploration of overlapping theories in advising practice through which a normative theory will likely emerge.

Moving from theory, we turn our attention to articles featuring insights on practice. Catherine Robertson, Rich Lewine, and Alison Sommers present their study on productive persistence versus self-defeating perseveration in male college students. They suggest ways to assist students in pursuing effective behaviors, including termination of perseveration. Emily Bullock-Yowell, Amy McConnell, and Emily Schedin look at the role of self-efficacy and negative thinking in struggles with career decision making and suggest ways

advisors can help undecided students to become more knowledgeable about and hence more self-efficacious in undertaking behaviors related to choice of major.

Shifting focus more specifically to a program designed to provide support for first-year STEM students, we congratulate Kathy Rodgers, Shelly Blunt, and Linda Tribble for their particularly effective effort based on outcome measures. Also, we welcome the contribution from Trudi Gaines who shares results from a survey she conducted with colleagues on students' preferences for and use of technology in academic advising. Both articles address ever-changing topics of importance among both practitioners and scholars.

Finally, going full circle back to assessment, we point to the article by Cathleen Smith and Janine Allen who empirically researched whether specific student learning outcomes for academic advising, which are associated with student success, reflect commonalities across many institutions. If such similarities exist, subsequent scholars may ultimately uncover, regardless of the theoretical foundation for advising practice or because of the interdisciplinary theoretical perspective of advising, common outcomes for academic advising that students need to achieve to be successful. Here again the importance of assessment is demonstrated.

This issue thus takes readers from a discussion of theory in academic advising to studies related to advising practices to the topic of technology, and it ends with a study on student learning outcomes for advising and a survey of assessment of advising practice. The breadth of topics featured herein demonstrates the continuing growth of academic advising as a field of practice and scholarship. It also points to the continuing need to assess effectiveness of advisor efforts in helping students achieve their goals.

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References

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