Assessment for Faculty Advising: Beyond the Service Component

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The faculty plays a critical role in the academic advising process in higher education settings. On the basis of a review of current literature on faculty advising, we propose a paradigm shift from assessment of faculty advising to assessment for faculty advising that extends the consideration of advising beyond the service component. Building upon an overview of the faculty advisor role, we unpack this paradigm shift and discuss aspects to consider to enhance the quality and assessment for faculty advising in terms of advising content, process, and impact. We highlight faculty engagement in the scholarship of academic advising to recognize faculty advising as more than faculty service responsibilities.

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Advising is acknowledged as one of the key higher education activities that support student engagement, retention, and long-term success, and faculty members play a critical role in the advising process (Hutson, 2013; Kramer, 2003). Reviewing the important events in the development of academic advising as a professional field in the United States, Cook (2009) recognized that faculty members served as the sole advisors for students until the 1950s when professional advising models and the student personnel profession was initially articulated. Despite the growth and development of professional advising, most teaching faculty members assume advising responsibilities regardless of the advising model(s) adopted by their institutions (Habley, 2004; Hutson, 2013).

Advising activities constitute part of many faculty members' workloads, regardless of whether they work with undergraduate or graduate students. However, it remains a challenge at most higher education institutions to take advising into consideration when evaluating faculty members' performances. Faculty members face difficulties fitting advising into a system in which performance evaluations typically focus on research, teaching, and service. In most cases, advising counts only toward the service activities expected of faculty members (White, 2015). Administrators find it challenging to establish workload policies and reward mechanisms that account for both the quantity of advisees assigned to faculty members and the quality of advising faculty advisors provide. In fact, the recognition of being a good faculty advisor is often seen as a double-edged sword because more students may seek advice from these faculty advisors instead of the advisors assigned to them. Thus, good faculty advisors may undertake increased advising responsibilities unofficially (Dillon & Fisher, 2000). From the perspectives of both faculty advisors and administrators, the number of advisees or the number of hours devoted to advising do not guarantee accountability or reward excellence (Stringer, MacGregor, & Watson, 2009).

On the basis of a review of the current literature on faculty advising, we propose a paradigm shift from assessment of faculty advising to assessment for faculty advising. We then unpack this paradigm shift and discuss aspects that need to be considered for those seeking to enhance the quality and assessment for faculty advising in terms of advising content, process, and impact. Finally, we highlight faculty engagement in the scholarship of academic advising to promote faculty advising beyond the service component in higher education settings.

Assessment for Faculty Advising

Role of Faculty Advisors

As a professional field, academic advising in the United States has evolved over the past century. Moving to include more than course registration support, the professionalization of the advising field has led to the flourishing of theories and models guiding advising practices. In addition to information-based advising approaches such as prescriptive advising, intervention-based approaches such as proactive advising, and holistic development-focused approaches such as developmental advising, advisors have applied student learning outcome–focused approaches and integrated strengths-based theories into academic advising (He & Hutson, 2016). Concepts and advising models, which include advising as teaching, strengths-based advising, and appreciative advising, have recently gained

popularity in research and practice (Hagen & Jordan, 2008; He & Hutson, 2016). Similarly, measures of advising impact have developed from focusing on student satisfaction, retention, and graduation to include students' development in noncognitive competencies such as creativity, persistence, and resilience (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001).

The role of faculty members in academic advising has also shifted. Prior to the establishment of professional advising, faculty members were assigned as students' advisors by default (Cook, 2009). By the mid-20th century, faculty members started to share advising responsibilities with professional advisors, or in some cases, advisors in centralized advising offices at the institution took over much of the advising responsibility from faculty members (Bloom & He, 2013; Habley & McCauley, 1987).

As the disposition, knowledge, and skill required for quality academic advising became increasingly specified, the separation between faculty and professional advisors grew (Cook, 2009). Although they may take on increased advising responsibilities in various institutional contexts (Carlstrom, 2013; Wallace & Wallace, 2010, 2015), faculty advisors rarely participate in professional development opportunities alongside professional advisors (Habley, 2004; Hutson, 2013; Kramer, 2003). Furthermore, administrators may think that giving professional advisors responsibility for intake, orientation, and general advising services is more efficient than trying to devise equitable ways to involve and reward faculty members from different disciplinary areas for their advising activities. As a result, faculty members, including those charged with advising students, may be perceived as indifferent toward advising. In some institutions, faculty members have limited time to allocate to advising activities because of their other responsibilities and the criteria used for promotion and tenure (Stringer et al., 2009).The lack of engagement in and recognition for faculty advising inevitably excludes the majority of faculty members from the discussion of advising assessment.

Assessing Faculty Advising

To ensure accountability and reward excellence, higher education administrators value the assessment process. To report to external stakeholders, institutional leadership must satisfy federal, regional, and state policies and regulations, and institutions must also meet standards set by accrediting agencies. To address internal development needs, administration relies on assessment results to monitor institutional change and to identify opportunities for improvement.

For faculty members, advising may not count much toward their teaching, research, and service responsibilities in the typical merit review or promotion and tenure process unless they are assigned to teach courses with group advising components (e.g., first-year seminars) that also count toward their teaching load (Williamson, Goosen, & Gonzalez, 2014). Advising typically falls under faculty service activities in promotion and tenure consideration (White, 2015). The classification of advising as service has limited assessment to measures such as the number of advisees served, the number of hours of spent in advising, and student satisfaction levels. As White (2015) noted,

> In fact, identifying academic advising as a service leads to erroneous expectations and inappropriate assessments. . . . Services, by their very nature, suggest that assessment focus on satisfaction. When academic advising assessment focuses on the satisfaction aspects of the experience, the learning outcomes of advising are often obscured and the significant mission of academic advising is lost. (pp. 272-273)

When perceived as part of the educational experiences of students, faculty advising can be measured to include more aspects than satisfaction, such as advising content, process, and outcomes that align with institutional missions, values, and goals. Furthermore, the faculty advising workload needs to be strategically assigned using a rationale other than equal distribution of cases (Stringer et al., 2009).

Assessment for Faculty Advising

Black and Wiliam (1998) introduced the assessment paradigm shift to the discussion of classroom teaching and learning practices. Specifically, they proposed the design of assessment for learning to include formative assessment measures that can be interpreted and used by both teachers and students to promote learning instead of reliance only on summative assessment of learning to monitor students' progress. Similarly, consideration of faculty advising beyond faculty service activities requires a paradigm shift

Table 1. Faculty advising assessment paradigm shift

Function	Assessment of Faculty Advising	Assessment for Faculty Advising
Purpose	Monitor quantity and quality of faculty advising	Engage in faculty advising improvement
Criteria	Measure focused on external impact	Balance of external impact and internal growth measures
Data	Data collected from students	Data collected from students, staff, and faculty members
Analysis and Interpretation	Descriptive reporting	Faculty-engaged discussions
Use	Institutional comparisons and program improvement	Program improvement and individual well-being

from viewing faculty advising assessment measures as mere tools to record the impact of faculty advising to using these measures for faculty advising development.

Under the current paradigm, the purpose of the assessment framework is to monitor the quantity and quality of faculty advising. The criteria for assessment focus on external impact, and student data such as satisfaction, graduation, and retention levels are used as main measures of advising outcomes that connect to institution accountability measures and satisfy external stakeholders. In the use of such measures, most faculty members are not involved in the analysis and interpretation of the assessment data despite the value of summative assessment results in guiding advising improvement.

The proposed assessment for the faculty advising paradigm is designed to engage faculty members in the advising-improvement process. Under this paradigm, a balance of external impacts and internal growth measures is selected, designed, and used by faculty members to collect data from students, staff, and other faculty members. Faculty advisors analyze and interpret the assessment findings, which inform not only advising program improvement for the institution but also the well-being of the faculty. Table 1 details the contrast between the two paradigms in terms of the purpose, criteria, data, analysis, interpretation, and use of faculty advising assessment.

Assessment of Advising Content, Process, and Impact for the Faculty

Although the specific criteria and rubrics vary across institutions, we propose three key aspects for higher education administrators to consider when engaging faculty members in the discussion of advising assessment. Building upon discussions of critical areas of advising that faculty members need to know (Hutson, 2013; Vowell & Farren, 2003; Wallace & Wallace, 2015), we focus on assessment criteria and recommended measures regarding faculty advising content, process, and impact.

Faculty Advising Content

Faculty members' development of conceptual understanding and informational content compose two critical aspects of quality advising (Hutson, 2013; Folsom, Yoder, & Joslin, 2015; Vowell & Farren, 2003). According to Habley (1995), advising practices without conceptual understanding lack context, and advising practices without information offer no substance.

The conceptual understanding entails faculty members' awareness of "the relationship between advising and institution mission, the expectations for academic advising by various stakeholders, and models and theories regarding college student cognitive, affective, and moral development" (Hutson, 2013, p. 7). To assess the conceptual understanding of advising for the faculty, at the institution level, the relationship between advising and institution mission as well as the general structure of advising must be clearly specified. This conceptual understanding also needs to be shared through faculty orientation and professional development initiatives. In addition, faculty members should reflect on their own advising philosophy in relationship to their philosophy of teaching, research, and service to articulate ways their personalized theories apply to their advising practices.

Personal practical theories (PPT) of advising (Bloom & He, 2013), in particular, can be included as part of the self-assessment that

faculty members use to reflect on the connection between their advising philosophy and the institution mission. A PPT involves engaging in reflective practice through which personal beliefs about academic advising practices and the sources for those beliefs are identified. For faculty members, this exercise may involve reflections on the ways advising aligns or is integrated with teaching, mentoring, research, and other realms of their professional identity. In addition, an examination of one's own experience as an advisee helps the advisor see the way past experiences may affect his or her current advising practice. This self-reflection allows faculty advisors to develop an integrated and dynamic set of beliefs, ethics, and self-authored practices that promote the development of advisors' professional identities (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). The informational content includes faculty members' knowledge of institution policy, general education and major-specific program requirements, cocurricular and extracurricular activities, student support services, and various advising tools including institutional data systems and instructional technologies that support advising discussions (Vowell & Farren, 2003). To assess the development of advising content for the faculty, measures such as a self-assessment checklist of key campus advising information or a needs assessment can be used. The 18 commonly addressed topics in exemplary faculty advising training, as summarized by Wilbur (2003), serve as good starting points for administrators interested in creating a contextualized measure for assessment.

More recently, in an interview, Tom Grites, past President of NACADA, emphasized three additional aspects of critical informational content for faculty members: available cocurricular experiences and relationships between cocurricular experiences and student development overall, alternative advising approaches that best meet students' needs, and background knowledge on learning theories and student development (Fusch, 2012). Grites argued that faculty advisors' responsibilities extend beyond course scheduling and registration. Grites, as cited in Fusch (2012), explained that the "faculty advisor's role is to help the student articulate their curricular, cocurricular, and career goals, and then assist them in creating a campus experience that will facilitate reaching those goals" (para. 11). Grites further suggested that in addition to the traditional one-to-one advising models, faculty advisors might fruitfully consider group advising or advising seminars as alternative approaches to advising. Finally, he recommended that faculty members gain an understanding of learning theories and student development. Faculty advisors can benefit from learning through practical examples and scenarios that illustrate these theories and applying these theories in their advising practice. In a similar suggestion, Wallace and Wallace (2015) highlighted four basic categories of information, according to Higginson's (2000) framework, necessary for faculty members to know: internal (institutional) environment, external environment, student needs, and advisor self-knowledge. The checklist they created serves as a self-assessment measure, especially for first-year faculty advisors as they explore information content to guide their advising practices.

Through these assessments, faculty advisors report their understanding of advising concepts and informational content. This information provides insights for the design of faculty orientation programming and professional development modules on advising. In addition, faculty experts in advising may be identified through the assessment process. These experts can serve as champions of assessment for faculty advising.

Faculty Advising Process

The process of faculty advising focuses on the relationship element of advising. It entails the way in which each faculty member manages interactions with students and the use of effective communication skills (Hutson, 2013). The quality of the faculty advising process is built upon faculty members' mastery of advising content.

For faculty advisors, relationship building in the advising process is two-fold. First, they need to develop strategies to engage students in the advising process. With their differing content backgrounds and various higher education experiences, faculty members employ unique strategies and formats to develop such relationships. Some faculty members may demonstrate mastery at making a connection with a specific group of students (e.g., students in particular majors) or using certain formats (e.g., face-to-face, online, individual, or in groups). Engaging faculty members in self-assessment of strengths and expertise, in addition to discussions of student feedback, can further strengthen their skills in building relationships with all students in a culturally responsive manner (Bloom et al.,

2008). To measure the quality of advising relationships with students, data can be collected from both faculty members and students regarding advisor strengths and ways to build on their strengths to improve the advising impact (Seligman, 2012). These data may include results from published instruments such as the *Student Strategies for Success Survey* (Hutson, 2006, 2010); *CliftonStrengths* (formerly *StrengthsQuest*) from Gallup (2017) and described by Clifton, Anderson, and Schreiner (2016); *Thriving Quotient* (Schreiner, 2010); and information gathered from existing institution-based faculty and student surveys.

Second, faculty members need to establish collaborative relationships with academic and student affairs staff and support services on their own campuses so they can make the referrals necessary for effective faculty advising (Bloom et al., 2008; Smith & Allen, 2006). Referrals can be categorized as general, specific, reactive, or proactive. Advisors offer general referrals to a campus office or web site, such as the financial aid office. They give specific referrals to information on a particular policy, procedure, or contact person; hence, to make specific referrals, faculty members must have working knowledge of policies and procedures on campus. Although most referrals are offered in reaction to students' questions, faculty advisors make proactive referrals when they observe and anticipate certain concerns of students, such as the need for professional counseling. The stronger the collaboration among faculty advisors and other campus units, the more specific and proactive referrals are given to students. Referral made by faculty advisors documented as part of the advising process not only provides faculty members with a reference record for future use but also allows various campus units to collaborate to enhance the support provided to meet the changing needs of the student population.

Faculty Advising Impact

The impact of faculty advising needs to be measured both from the student and faculty perspectives. Traditionally, the measures focus on the impact of academic advising on students' cognitive growth. The term *cognitive* is typically used to describe students' content mastery and academic understanding as captured through measures such as student class performance and cumulative GPA. More recently, studies have identified the importance of *noncognitive* aspects of learning, such as attitudes, motivation, and learning strategies that affect learner performance. Many researchers point out that these cognitive and noncognitive factors are integrally connected to support the development of learning (Borghans, Duckworth, Heckman, & ter Weel, 2008; Conley, 2013). In addition to playing a role in the academic learning process, noncognitive factors, which differ from academic knowledge, are also believed to exert influence on later-in-life outcomes (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001).

According to the premise of the importance of noncognitive factors in learning, Farrington et al. (2012) conducted a critical literature review examining the factors connected to learners' long-term academic success. Their comprehensive review of a wide range of research studies led to five general categories of noncognitive factors related to adolescent learners' academic performance: academic behaviors, perseverance, and mind-sets; learning strategies; and social skills. They argued that learners' academic mind-sets undergird the development of other noncognitive factors and that learners' growth in academic perseverance and academic behaviors may be viewed as outcomes that directly affect college readiness and later life successes. To enhance learners' academic behaviors and perseverance, educators must focus on learners' development of "positive mindset and effective learning strategies" (Farrington et al., 2002, p. 7). Working with students in academic disciplinary areas and guiding them in exploring future career options, faculty advisors are uniquely situated to cultivate students' growth in the noncognitive aspects. When examining the impact of faculty advising from the students' perspective, faculty advisors should consider both students' cognitive and noncognitive growth.

From the faculty perspective, in addition to those regarding student growth, measures such as student satisfaction with advising experiences and faculty workload may capture the immediate outcomes of advising, and measures such as graduation, student retention, and faculty turnover rates might be categorized as indices of long-term impact. However, the current interpretations of assessment data for faculty advising do not always account for the intermediate measures, which link the immediate outcomes to the long-term impact.

According to positive psychology theories, we propose the use of well-being measures to serve as intermediate measures for evaluating faculty

Table 2. *PERMA-Profile* for faculty advisors

Well-being Factor	Indicator for Advisors
Position Emotion	• How often do you feel joyful as an academic advisor? • How often do you feel positive as an academic advisor? • To what extent do you feel content as an academic advisor?
Engagement	• How often do you become absorbed in what you do as an academic advisor? • To what extent do you feel excited and interested in advising-related activities? • How often do you lose track of time while participating in advising-related activities?
Positive Relationships	• To what extent do you receive needed support for academic advising? • To what extent do you feel well supported as an academic advisor? • How satisfied are you with your relationship with the students you advise?
Meaning	• To what extent do you feel that the advising activities in which you engage are purposeful and meaningful? • To what extent do you feel that your practice in advising is valuable and worthwhile? • To what extent do you feel a sense of direction in your own growth as an academic advisor?
Accomplishment	• How often do you feel you are making progress toward your advising goals? • How often do you achieve the professional goals you set for yourself? • How often are you able to handle your advising responsibilities?
General Well-being	• Considering all aspects of your professional responsibilities, how happy are you as an academic advisor?

Note. Adapted from Hone et al. (2014).

advising impact. Seligman (2012) extended the definition of happiness to well-being, a construct measurable through five elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). The *PERMA-Profiler* (Butler & Kern, 2013) expanded upon previous measures of flourishing to include multiple aspects of positive functioning in addition to the evaluation of emotional well-being (Hone, Jarden, Schofield, & Duncan, 2014). Through application of these measures in the faculty advising context, the level of impact of academic advising activities on faculty well-being is reflected in their emotions toward advising content and process, their voluntary engagement in advising-related professional development activities, their satisfaction with the relationships that they develop through the advising process, the value and meaning they assign to advising tasks, and the goals they identify and achieve in progressing toward these goals. Using the *PERMA-Profiler* as the foundation, faculty members can define meaning and document accomplishment of advising as related to their own advising philosophy and institutional goals (i.e., advising conceptual content), evaluate their interest and motivation in developing knowledge and skills regarding advising (i.e., advising informational content), and reflect on their satisfaction in terms of the advising relationship with both students and staff (i.e., advising process). Table 2 presents modified PERMA indicators in the faculty advising context.

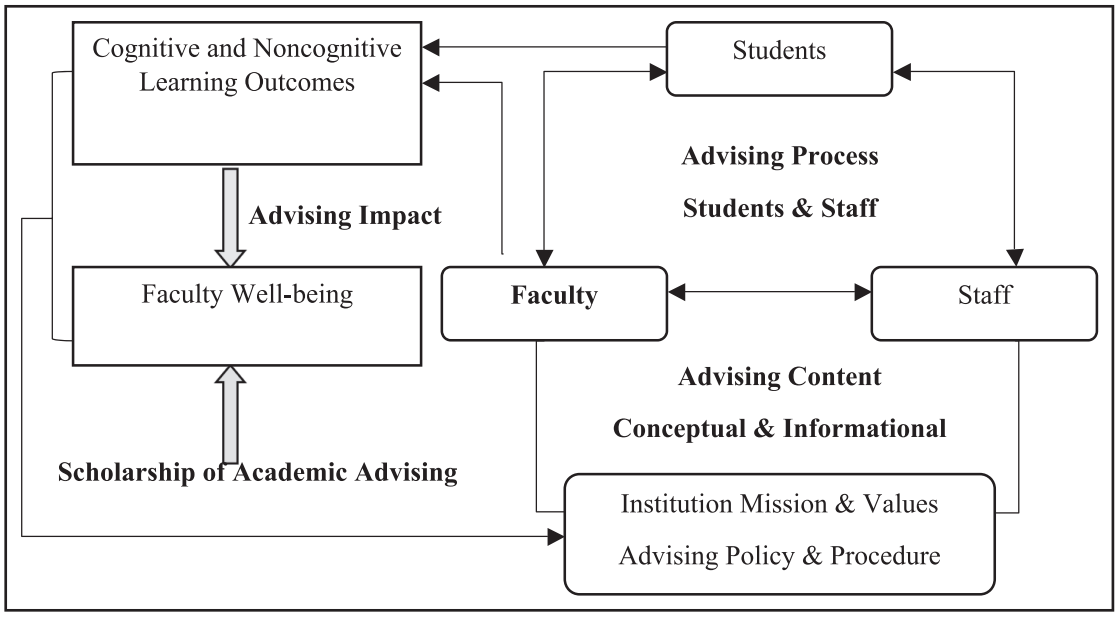
To assess the overall impact of advising for the faculty, we propose using measures of intermediate outcomes for students and faculty advisors. The intermediate outcomes are defined according to individual faculty member's advising philosophy, faculty well-being as monitored using the adapted *PERMA-Profile*, and connections of both the immediate outcomes and faculty well-being to institution long-term advising goals, missions, and values (Figure 1).

Scholarship of Academic Advising for Faculty

To complete the assessment loop, assessment results need to be used for improvement of faculty advising practices for institutional change and development. All advisors should not only understand advising theories and research but also use research to inform their practice (Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, & Troxel, 2010).

The seminal works published by Crookston (1972/2009) and O'Banion (1972/2009)

Figure 1. Assessment of advising content, process, and impact for faculty



established developmental advising as a challenge to the prescriptive advising paradigm (Cook, 2009; White, 2015). With various applications of cognitive, psychological, and educational theories in academic advising, multiple approaches to academic advising have emerged (Hagen & Jordan, 2008; He & Hutson, 2016). As White (2015) explained:

> For academic advising to flourish, it is imperative to continually examine the nature of the endeavor. . . . A scholarly imperative needs a healthy inquisitiveness to thoughtfully examine the current practices of academic advising and to develop new knowledge of how it can be practiced. (p. 274)

Bringing research expertise from their disciplinary areas, faculty members are ideally positioned to collaborate with other campus partners to design and carry out a scholarship agenda that enhances academic advising quality. First, with their discipline-specific knowledge, faculty members may bring new insights to current theories that inform advising practices. As major and career options continue to change rapidly, faculty members' expertise and awareness of new developments in their disciplines can contribute significantly to advising content and processes. Second, scholarship impact is used as a measure for faculty tenure and promotion. The opportunity to develop scholarship on the basis of their advising practices enhances the integration of research and practice and generates increased recognition of faculty members' contributions to advising. Third, through involvement in scholarly collaboration and research efforts, faculty members naturally become more familiar with the literature on academic advising, which in turn can be used to support the dissemination of advising scholarship more broadly. The engagement of faculty members in the scholarship of academic advising also offers potential for scholarly discussions regarding ways to identify meaningful cognitive and noncognitive learning outcomes as a result of academic advising and effective measures of advising impact.

Faculty advisors can take on active roles in the scholarship of academic advising through program evaluation and action research. On one hand, *program evaluation* consists of the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to improve effectiveness and program development decisions (Patton, 1997). It entails conducting comprehensive inquiry into the advising program. The evaluation can be administered at the program, department, school, or institutional level. Participating in program evaluation design engages faculty members in discussions of the inputs,

resources, activities, outcomes, and impacts of academic advising (He & Hutson, 2016). Faculty expertise in research design, qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation can be leveraged to enhance the reliability or trustworthiness, internal validity or credibility, and external validity or transferability of the research study to offer implications that extend beyond the program under study.

On the other hand, *action research* can directly influence advising behaviors, procedures, and policies. Based on collaborative inquiry into activities by those engaged in the activity, action research is typically action driven and oriented (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The research questions may emerge from faculty advisors' own experiences with advising and reflection about their personal practices. Individuals or groups of faculty advisors may carry out the inquiry to examine their own practices and address the research questions. The findings can provide faculty advisors with immediate feedback about their own practices and create implications for the institution. Such efforts parallel the scholarship of teaching and learning practices that involve the use of action research to improve classroom teaching (Goel, 2012; Ryan, 2013)

In addition to approaches such as program evaluation and action research, Aiken-Wisniewski et al. (2010) referenced *translational research* as a model that fosters collaborative research partnerships in the study of academic advising. Translational research originated in the field of medicine where it is used for collaborative inquiry and through which knowledge derived from basic sciences is applied to practices that affect patient well-being (Woolf, 2008). Applied to academic advising, translational research calls for the intentional collaboration among professional and faculty advisors and the use of scientific inquiry in advising research. Such collaboration can result in further integration of advising and discipline-specific scholarship, and it advances innovative scholarly practices that set and promote the research agenda for the academic advising field in general.

Summary

As one of the most important experiences that affect students' academic success and holistic development, quality advising is considered a value-added experience for students (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). To meet the increasingly diverse needs of college students, faculty advisors need to be engaged through advising activities and assessment such that advising receives affirmation as an endeavor extending beyond service. The paradigm shift from assessment of faculty advising to assessment for faculty advising offers a critical perspective to not only monitor the quality of existing advising practices but also to offer insights that advance advising theories, practices, and research.

When designing faculty advising assessment, we recommend that higher education professionals start with the exploration of faculty members' backgrounds and expertise in advising, disciplinary-based content knowledge, and research in relation to institution missions and goals through the assessment of faculty advisors' understanding of advising concepts. In addition, faculty advisors should self-assess their knowledge of the informational content in areas such as institutional policy and procedures related to advising. The assessment of advising content for faculty advisors can guide the development of measures for advising process and impact. During the evaluation of the advising process, assessment data need to be collected from faculty members and staff rather than solely from student satisfaction surveys. When selecting measures to examine the advising impact, intermediate outcomes—including faculty well-being—need to considered. Finally, the promotion of the scholarship of academic advising on campus and the intentional creation of opportunities for practices, such as translational research, can benefit all higher education professionals working in academic advising, which in turn, benefits students and the entire institution.

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