# Putting Theory into Practice: Virginia Gordon at Ohio State

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*Most individuals in the field of academic advising know Virginia Gordon through the dedicated and transformative work she did for NACADA. Less well known is the equally creative and transformative work she engaged in for most of her professional life at Ohio State University. This article addresses how her ideas and convictions about academic advising became the blueprint for how she created advising programs at Ohio State's University College from the mid-1970s to her retirement in the mid-1990s. The work she did during that time anticipated many of the ideas and practices adopted later by the academic advising field.*

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In Higgins and Campbell's article for this special edition of the *NACADA Journal* dedicated to Virginia N. Gordon, the authors discussed Gordon's leadership style, aligning it with that of servant leadership. Higgins and Campbell included many heartfelt quotes from individuals who were touched by Virginia's personal contact and leadership as they describe the honors and recognition she received throughout her years of professional service.

Less well known, though, is the dedicated and transformative work she engaged in for most of her professional life at Ohio State University. The history of how Gordon created the advising programs for undecided and major-changing students has only been partially told (Gordon, 1981; Gordon & Steele, 1992, 2015). To rectify this, this article will address how her ideas and convictions about academic advising became the blueprint for how she created two advising programs at Ohio State's University College from the mid-1970s to her retirement in the mid-1990s. In this effort, Gordon demonstrated her skilled command of the educational process, focusing on curricular development, instructional design, and critical learning to help students with their educational and career planning. Through this process, Gordon also demonstrated a creative and experimental temperament and ability to adjust and adapt to ever-changing organizational structures and evolving technologies. The goal of this article is to describe how Gordon addressed educational and administrative challenges in her context so that the work she did with colleagues external to Ohio State would be better understood and more deeply appreciated.

## Gordon's Foundational Beliefs

In describing Gordon's impact and accomplishments at Ohio State, it is necessary first to ascertain what she sought to achieve and the challenges she encountered in implementing the two advising programs. This overview of some of Gordon's foundational beliefs will describe how her graduate work and life-long commitment to developmental advising shaped her efforts. To wit, when she became program coordinator in 1973, Gordon used these foundational beliefs as a framework to design and build the undecided program at Ohio State.

### Influences of Progressive Education

While Virginia Gordon certainly had an impact on Ohio State University, it is also fair to say that Ohio State University, and in particular its College of Education, had an effect on her. In 1977, Gordon completed her doctoral work at Ohio State's College of Education in the field of counseling education. Her dissertation was titled "Differentiated Levels of Undecidedness and Choice Satisfaction among Educationally and Vocationally Uncommitted University Freshmen." At the time of her graduate work, the College of Education was going through a generational transition. The older faculty members had built the College of Education's reputation on being instrumental in advancing the progressive education movement, and it was one of two colleges of education—Columbia University being the other—vying for this recognition (Cremin, 1964). The leaders at the two institutions were Boyd Bode at Ohio State and William Kilpatrick at Columbia. Commenting on the influence of both, Cremin (1964) wrote the following:

> In the last analysis, it may be that Bode's work more closely resembled the spirit and temper of [John] Dewey's; while Kilpatrick's, in seeking to make Dewey's ideas manageable for mass consumption by the teaching

> profession ended by transforming them into versions entirely different from the originals. (p. 221)

Bode differed from Kilpatrick in several ways, with one being particularly significant. While Kilpatrick advanced the idea of a "project method" as a means of formalizing the critical thinking process, Bode believed that "methods and content would have to vary in terms of the content and the children taught" (Cremin, 1964, p. 223). In short, Bode embraced the idea that many different approaches to teaching needed to be used, whereas Kilpatrick believed that a structured inclusive approach to critical thinking could be applied to instruction. While the impact that these different schools of thought had on Gordon during her graduate work is impossible to state, the stance advocated by Bode clearly appeared in her academic work and professional practice throughout her life. Gordon never reduced her approach to working with students to a single advising approach. She embraced and advocated for multiple strategies to engage students in critical thinking. Gordon (1977) wrote the following in her dissertation:

> A career counseling program which seeks to help undecided students should not only use approaches providing occupational information and teaching decision-making skills, but it should be sensitive to the feelings and pressures undecided students face. The trial and error method should be taught as a natural process that is necessary for making important decisions. (p. 8)

In this way, Gordon advanced ideas promoted by John Dewey (1913/1973) in his book *Interest and Effort*. Indeed, Gordon relied on the spirit of John Dewey's work by using student interest in academic programs or potential occupations as a foundation for the decision-making approaches she deployed to assist them with their academic and career planning (Steele, 2013).

**Defining Developmental Advising**

Gordon's commitment to developmental advising was driven by the fact that she valued the need to address the complex issues, feelings, and pressures students encounter when entering college. Her views are most clearly articulated in the two articles she wrote about this approach, one as the sole author and the other with Tom Grites. In her 1994 article "Development Advising: The Elusive Ideal," she addressed practical challenges and misconceptions about how the foundational article about developmental advising by Crookston (1972/2009) was interpreted and how that, in turn, hindered the implementation of this approach. Gordon identified a developmental approach to advising as "focusing on individual students' concerns, needs, and aspirations" (p. 71). This student-centered approach, she argued, attempts to develop the whole student intellectually, personally, and socially.

Gordon advanced several critical ideas in her 1994 article that were consistent with her approach to design and development. She believed that the tenets of developmental advising could be integrated into a 20-minute interview (p. 71), but that contact between advisors and students over an extended period of time was critical to the development of the relationship of trust needed so that students could engage in discussing, creating, and implementing their educational goals and plans (p. 73). Gordon emphasized Crookston's position regarding the importance of the student's role and responsibility in the advising relationship (p. 73.) Gordon also noted that other factors, such as advisor training and program evaluation, were necessary to create a high-quality developmental advising program.

Additional foundational ideas were illuminated in the article she wrote with Tom Grites in 2009, titled "Developmental Academic Advising Revisited." Grites and Gordon were responding to an article written by Hemwall and Trachte (2005), who they believed had misinterpreted some critical ideas about developmental advising in general and Crookston's article in particular. Grites and Gordon emphasized that Crookston's article was titled "A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching." Therefore, teaching, not counseling, was the basis of developmental advising. Likewise, whereas students' personal growth was a critical concern for those advocating the developmental approach, it was not more important than intellectual or social growth. In one key passage, Grites and Gordon stated that "academic goals, decisions, and learning cannot be isolated from students' career goals and aspirations nor social characteristics and environments" (p. 13). In another critical passage, Grites and Gordon wrote that "the central mission of advising is to help students understand and appreciate the value of liberal

learning, to acquire the capacity for critical thinking, and to make wise curricular choices based on their goals" (pp. 13–14). They agreed with Hemwall and Trachte's goal to create academic advisors "who focus on the educational planning in a context of students' strengths and interests, taking into account their readiness to make solid academic decisions based on short- and long-term goals" (p. 14).

### Theory into Practice at University College

Gordon was working at Ohio State University while she was completing her graduate work. She acknowledged that she was fortunate to begin her work at an institution that valued academic advising and sought innovative ways to improve "advising structures and procedures [to]. . .meet increasing enrollments and expanding student-advising needs" (Gordon, 2004, p. 17). The creation of University College in 1966 was the institution's most recent attempt to address what had been called for over 50 years the "freshman problem" or issues related to student academic preparedness and vocational awareness (Gordon, 2004). Minnick (1993) identified the mission of University College as to "advise lower division students on curricular matters, to support them in their initial year or two of enrollment, and to hand them off to a degree-granting unit once they had settled on a thoughtful, workable choice" (p. 58). Gordon was fortunate to be in an organizational structure that recognized that most first-year students were not decided about their academic and vocational choices and that it was better to centralize advising services rather than to disperse students upon entry to degree-granting colleges.

Organizationally, University College's advising programs were arranged into curricular academic program (CAP) areas. Eighteen of these CAP areas were aligned with degree-granting colleges at Ohio State and acted as pre-major advising programs. Students in these CAP areas were assigned a pre-major advisor and would work with that advisor until they completed the transfer requirements or were admitted to a degree-granting college by application acceptance or a portfolio review. Two CAP areas that were not aligned with degree-granting colleges were the CAP area for undecided or exploring students and a program designed to assist minority students. Gordon became the coordinator of advising for the undecided program in 1973, nine years after University College was started.

### Gordon's Advising Curriculum

Gordon proposed an advising curriculum that remained consistent in terms of its framework but had several variations in practice over time. With her interest in teaching and learning, Gordon created an advising curriculum with four components: self-knowledge, occupational/career knowledge, educational knowledge, and decision-making.

Gordon used these categories in a variety of ways. In 1992, she used them to organize content for career planning (p. 75). In 1995, she used them to organize probing questions that advisors could use to guide student exploration in an advising session (pp. 114–115). Gordon also used these four categories to shape the way she organized the program for undecided students at University College, starting in the mid-1970s.

Gordon's four curricular components addressed the principles of developmental advising but also highlighted that the primary focus for academic advising was student learning; the latter reflected in both the "NACADA Concept of Advising" and the Council of Academic Standards. As the "Concept of Advising" summarizes, "Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes" (2006, para. 9). In short, Gordon's advising curriculum was a means to organize content, resources, learning objectives, activities, student-learning evaluations, and program assessments.

The self-knowledge, educational knowledge, and occupational/career knowledge categories were used to assess and organize the learning objectives, relevant content, resources, and activities related to each of these topics. The decision-making category addressed how to engage students in both the cognitive and affective critical thinking processes for each of the other three categories. Decision-making also focused on the integration, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge and values for the first three categories as they related to the creation of students' academic and career plans. In short, the decision-making category focused on helping students develop their metacognitive capabilities using the pedagogy of critical thinking to help them understand and make meaning of the information and values they used in the construction of their plans.

**Methods of Delivery**

At University College during Gordon's time, three primary means existed for delivering academic advising: orientation, survey courses, and individual advising sessions (Minnick, 1993, pp. 61–63). Workshops and group advising also served as a fourth method of delivering academic advising, but these latter modalities were not mandatory for students. True to her foundational beliefs, Gordon used all these means of delivery to promote her advising curriculum.

**Orientation**

At Ohio State, orientation for new and transfer students from the late-1960s to 2000 was administered by University College. This policy gave Gordon administrative control of her area of undecided students, and she used it to implement her curriculum. The general focus of orientation was an introduction to the university and the issues related to scheduling for students' first terms of enrollment. The orientation program for undecided students was unique in that it was the only program in the college that *separated* parents from students for the introductory session that described the advising program. This separation was intentional and done for three reasons. First, the separate parent orientation program emphasized to all family members the importance of having undecided students make their own decisions and that being undecided was perfectly normal for college students. Second, the separate orientations for parents and students provided advisors with time to help students develop what was called a "neutral schedule." This term meant a schedule request for the first quarter of enrollment that would contain courses that met the curricular requirements for up to three different academic programs that students had expressed interest in pursuing. The third reason was to introduce students to Gordon's curriculum to help them begin to develop an understanding of the exploration process in which they would be engaged. The goal of this step was to lessen student anxiety by providing them with the experience of working within the exploration process identified by Gordon. The need for this action was affirmed by Gordon and Steele's (2003) analysis that, between 1975 and 1999, 80% of students attending the undecided advising program orientation reported that they were "very anxious" or "somewhat anxious" about not having selected a major (p. 24).

By taking the first small steps with the students, integrating some self-assessment information through a consideration of their interests, providing some educational planning, and producing a neutral schedule, students could experience how the process worked and ostensibly reduce their anxiety. Advisors also assisted students by presenting possible course pathways based on their placement test results and fields of study, such as business, health care, engineering, or liberal arts.

**Survey Course**

The University Survey Course was administered by University College for all new Ohio State students across all its campuses. While university-wide interests shaped some elements of the course syllabus, Gordon (1989) exercised significant control over the entering undecided student sections. The course was a 1-hour credit course that lasted throughout the 10-week quarter. Academic advisors taught the course. The students enrolled in it were assigned to the advisor teaching the class as part of the advisor's caseload. The weekly course format included a large lecture combined with smaller student recitation sections. The syllabus described the course as an "introduction to the University Community, strategies for successful transitions to and participation in that community, institutional context of academic programs; education and learning in a life-long process; University resources and procedures" (Minnick, 1993, pp. 66–69).

The course included topics for all Ohio State students as well as topics related to the specific academic program a student had selected. Examples of topics addressed by all students included a library assignment, a review of the *Code of Student Conduct*, the purpose of a university, how to be a successful student, and contemporary issues, such as racial and gender equality. The remainder of the course was dedicated to helping students develop their educational and career plans based on their program of enrollment.

For undecided students, Gordon's curricular outline shaped their learning outcomes, activities, and evaluations as they developed their exploration plans. In general, the outline of activities associated with each category of Gordon's curriculum was as follows.

**Self-assessment.** Gordon's focus when it came to self-assessment was to have students identify how their personal and career interests, abilities,

and values were related to the educational and career planning processes. The role of the advisor was to help students identify how the elements of self-assessment related to possible educational and career paths. Over time, the means of helping students engage in self-assessment changed as various instruments came to be used to help students identify their interests. In general, the instruments were based on either Holland's theory of vocational types or the Worker Trait Group Inventory. The goal was not to have students categorize themselves based on theory but to use the descriptions of different types that these theories offered to better understand and define themselves.

**Educational planning.** Gordon's focus for educational planning was to have students review information on academic programs so that they could develop a coursework plan during their first year. The purpose was not only to ensure students were taking required courses for the majors that they were considering but also to determine at what point the courses they selected could not be applied to all of the majors they were considering. Multiple course activities were used to help students accomplish the goals for this component of the curriculum, including introducing students to all of Ohio State's majors and using the results of the self-assessments to relate interests to program options.

**Career planning.** Gordon's focus for career planning was to help students better understand the world of work and the resources available to them. As noted earlier, Gordon (1977, 1986) integrated both educational and career planning based on the insight and conviction that students did not separate the two; in fact, students were often anxious about what type of employment opportunities were related to and available with various majors. For undecided first-year students, the focus of the course was not on specific jobs but instead on career awareness, such as job families and trends. Throughout the mid-1970s to 2000, sources of career information changed from print resources, such as those found at a career library, to digital resources, such as those found on the Internet. One important activity addressed career and personal values. Students were asked to rank various related career and personal values and then reflect on how these were related to their consideration of their major program and possible career path.

**Decision making.** The decision-making component of Gordon's curriculum focused on helping students organize and assess the information they were reviewing and to examine the accuracy and consequences of their beliefs as these related to their academic and career planning. In part, Gordon was partially influenced by the work of student developmental psychologists, such as Perry (1970, 1981) and Knefelkamp and Slepitza (1978). These scholars believed that college students passed through a sequence of epistemic growth and that college educators who were attuned to students' cognitive development could assist students by helping them develop better critical thinking skills by modeling and challenging them through their instructional approaches. This component of Gordon's curriculum was not only designed to help students become more self-aware in making critical decisions about their academic and career plans, but it was also intended to help students become more aware of their decision-making approach. This latter goal of assisting students to gain insight into their metacognitive processes was undertaken by having them take a decision-making style inventory to identify their possible strengths and weaknesses as decision makers. Students also engaged in intentional learning activities and recorded their reflections and new information that they collected during the course on worksheets that helped them organize their planning. As a final project, students completed a summary of their work and reflected on it through short answers and essay questions. Items that students had to address in their summaries included the following (Gordon & Steele, 1998):

- List the curricular and admission information for three academic programs under consideration.
- List the results of your interest inventory as it relates to your interests, abilities, and career values and how these might impact your planning.
- Identify the type of decision-making style that best describes you and possible strengths and weaknesses you might encounter in planning.
- Action steps you are going to take after the course that will help you continue to better ground your plans, so you can make a well-informed decision.
- Identify on a scale of *very undecided* to *very decided* where you believe you fall in the planning process. How do you feel about the process so far?

- What is your timeline for deciding? What courses do you plan to take for the next two terms?
- Using a force-field analysis, what do you see as the forces for and against your selection of one of the three academic programs you explored this term?

Completed worksheets were then used by the advisor as another source of formative evaluation information during advising sessions. Gordon trained her advisors not to use students' worksheets as a summative evaluation, but rather as a starting point for a conversation regarding their plans.

**Advising Sessions**

Students could make an appointment with their advisor at any time during their enrollment at University College. Gordon (1992) identified the primary flow of advising appointments as containing five interactive components: 1) opening the interview and establishing/re-establishing a relationship with the student, 2) identifying the problem by having the student state it in their own words, 3) identifying possible solutions, 4) acting on the solution; and 5) summarizing the transaction (p. 53). Given her advocacy of the developmental advising approach, two key points need to be noted about Gordon's model. First, an advising session modeled the definition of reflective thinking by John Dewey (1933) in his book *How We Think* as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 9). In this way, advisors helped students develop and engage in critical thinking. The ability to help students engage in critical thinking was supported by the work students had done during orientation, in the survey course, and in previous advising sessions.

Second, for Gordon (1992), the advising session was a place where advisors could work with students not only on academic issues but also on problems of a personal, social, or developmental nature (p. 54). For Gordon, the advisor needed to establish a trusting relationship with students to permit such a wide range of issues to be brought forth by them. As a professional, they also needed to know the limits of their expertise and responsibilities. When those limits were reached, Gordon insisted that advisors refer students to another professional or resource, whether on or off campus. The academic advisor's primary responsibility, as highlighted in Gordon's curriculum, was to assist students in developing and implementing their educational and career plans so they could be successful in their college experience. Personal, social, and developmental issues were addressed because these concerns could often impede the progress students might make toward developing and implementing their plans. As indicated in McDonald's article in this issue, Gordon's approach to advisor training supported her belief in using multiple advising approaches when working with students.

**The Alternatives Advising Program**

Gordon was also the driving force behind the creation of a special advising unit at University College at Ohio State in the late 1980s. It was intended to provide "a more personal and intensive advising to students with advanced credit hours who were in the process of changing academic and vocation direction" (Gordon & Steele, 1992, pp. 22–23). The goals of the program were a) to provide to this student population an intensive academic and career advising approach that provided a personalized, caring environment during their transition and b) to help them choose realistic and attainable majors that demonstrated stability of choice over time, supported with services designed for these students with the goal of enhancing their college success and institutional retention.

Gordon developed the Alternatives Advising Program due in part to the pressures advisors in the undecided program faced in trying to help this population. Generally, the alternative advising program was intended for students at University College at the mid-point of their sophomore year or later who a) were denied admission to a selective admission program, b) were unsuccessful in completing the required coursework for a specific program, c) had reached junior status, or d) were still undecided about their academic or vocational direction. Initially, referrals to the alternatives program relied on advisor referrals from the undecided advising program and pre-major programs within University College. By the mid-1990s though, potential students for referral were identified using the institution's data warehouse to prepare lists of possible students. Advisors in the pre-major program and undecided advising area were asked to approve the transfer if, in the

advisor's judgment, the student would benefit from working with an alternatives program advisor.

The Alternatives Advising Program used three modified modes of delivery, as compared to the undecided program. The program relied on a longer advising time for individual sessions, a 3-hour credit course designed to help these students establish their academic and vocational direction, and the use of group advising workshops organized around a variety of different topics. The advising curriculum for this special population was also modified. Before engaging in self-assessment, students went through a "taking stock" module. This step emphasized the importance of decision making and the reexamination of prior decisions. In the workbook they designed for the course, Gordon and Sears (1997b) defined the purpose of this curricular module as to have students "take stock of your current situation and examine how it has resulted from decisions you have made about your academic major and career" (p. 1). During its dozen or so years of existence, the Alternatives Advising Program grew from initially having one and a half advisors staff the program to having two full-time advisors and three to four part-time graduate students advising students during the late 1990s.

The program was also assessed. One published account was a longitudinal study conducted by Steele, Kennedy, and Gordon in 1993. In this study, the authors reported that the students who exited the program had a higher consistency in maintaining the major they selected while in the program through to their graduation compared to a cohort and a randomly selected group of students who shared characteristics with students who were referred to the alternatives program. They also graduated at a higher rate than the other two groups of students. Gordon's conviction that academic advising could help this special population was confirmed.

### Developing Resources and Activities

Gordon not only created workbooks to help guide students through the decision-making process for both the undecided and alternatives programs but also supplemented these with other resources she designed or introduced. Three examples are resources for informational interviewing, re-structured career resources in the library, and computer-based career advising systems.

Gordon created two resources for informational interviewing. She recruited graduating seniors every year from degree-granting colleges at Ohio State who were willing to talk with underclass students about their major, career direction, and decision-making process. This resource was named Senior Bank. She also recruited a group of Ohio State alumni who were willing to be interviewed by underclass students about issues related to their major, career direction, and decision-making process. This resource was called Partners in Education. In addition to recruiting these individuals, Gordon also created resources that discussed the importance of informational interviews and gave suggestions on how to conduct one. Individuals who participated in these programs provided a valuable human resource for exploring students.

At the time, the Ohio State University library system had many sites. In the pre-Internet age, all career resources on campus were printed and distributed through the library system. Working with the library staff, Gordon centralized all career resources into one location and had them reorganized, dropping the Dewey Decimal System traditionally used by the library in favor of the Worker Trait Group System—a means of categorizing careers developed by the U.S. Department of Labor. After changing the method used to categorize the career resources, students were able to more easily access resources related to the self-assessment information they obtained using the inventories as a guide.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, two computer-based career advising systems were adopted as additional resources for students to use in their exploration and planning. The two systems were *Discover*, a product of American College Testing programmed to focus on the importance of student interests, and *Sigi Plus*, a product of the Educational Testing Service, which was programmed to focus on the student's ranking of the importance of career values.

In 1997, the Undecided Advising Program and Alternatives Advising Program at Ohio State were recognized by NACADA. Both were awarded the Outstanding Advising Program Award. In the role of consultant, Gordon, who was then an assistant dean at University College, worked with several of her mentees who were promoted to administer both programs. This team used Gordon's curriculum and resources as a basis for building a web site for students to explore. By embracing the Internet, the need lessened for printed resources, such as the career library, and they were eventually phased out.

### Activities and Evidence of Student Learning

Overlooked, yet important in Gordon's work, was her role in creating activities that produced evidence of student learning. As stated, Gordon established general learning goals at the curricular level, but she also established learning outcomes at the instructional level that focused on helping students achieve broader curricular learning goals. The instructional learning goals had activities associated with them that had students engage in various forms of critical thinking as it related to their planning. Examples of these instructional goals are reflected in the previously mentioned synopsis of items students had to address in their worksheet summaries. These instructional-level learning outcomes focused on having students explore their unexamined beliefs and reflect on the information they acquired as they developed their plans. At this instructional level of advising, Gordon produced some of the most creative but overlooked content in the field of academic advising. As Gordon developed her approach, more mature versions of it appeared in the workbooks she created for working with undecided and major-changing students (Gordon & Sears, 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Gordon & Steele, 1998). The use of these activities helped advisors rise above their reliance on using probing and higher-order questions to engage students in a conversation during the advising session. In this way, Gordon's use of learning outcomes at both the curricular and instructional levels helped students with their creative efforts to develop their academic and career plans. Equally important, Gordon's approach had students provide tangible evidence of their learning. While Gordon's work focused predominately on undecided students, she believed that all students would benefit from developing educational and career plans in this fashion.

## Discussion

Gordon's design and development of advising programs for undecided and major-changing students at Ohio State benefited from the historical attention the institution gave to academic advising and its desire to improve its quality over many decades in the previous century. Into this supportive environment, Gordon brought her commitment to grounding the advising programs she administered within a developmental student-centric approach that focused on both teaching and learning. Many critical ideas formed the basis of her approach: a) that both students and advisors shared a responsibility in the advising relationship, b) that an increase in the time that advisors and advisees spent together improved the quality of the relationship, c) that the central focus of the advising relationship was the creation of students' academic and career plans, and d) that the development of students' plans needed to occur in a resource-rich environment in which advisors provided an intentional framework to help students develop their critical thinking skills. In short, Gordon advocated for a balance between teaching and learning in advising that shaped the way she developed her approach at both the programmatic and advisor/advisee interaction levels.

Gordon anticipated many of the foundational educational ideas developed later in the documents that comprise NACADA's Pillars of Academic Advising. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the advising program she developed at Ohio State clearly had an identifiable academic advising curriculum with learning outcomes directly associated with that curriculum and an intentional focus on using critical or reflective thinking as a pedagogical approach when working with students.

While many of Gordon's ideas and practices have influenced the academic advising community, her insistence on balancing teaching and learning did not get as much recognition. One is left to speculate: What if Gordon, or those who knew her work the best, had more forcefully promoted and advanced the balance between teaching and learning? Perhaps the overemphasis since the turn of this century on what an advisor does instead of what students learn would have been better balanced in the advising literature. In discussions on advising as teaching (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005; Lowenstein, 2009) and, more generally, on advising approaches (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013), the predominant focus is on what advisors do, not on what students need to learn.

Gordon's embrace of and advocacy for intentionally adopting multiple approaches to engaging students in critical or reflective thinking would have complemented all of these efforts. The editors of the book *Academic Advising Approaches: Strategies that Teach Students to Make the Most of College* shared this position. The editors of this book challenged their readers to "use the theories, approaches, and strategies in this book to influence advising practice and help students better meet their academic goal and career aspirations" (Drake et al., 2013, p. *xiv*). By testing "theories, approaches, and strategies" against the evidence of student-learning outcomes, advisors can

improve their practice, as opposed to embracing one theory, approach, or strategy based solely on its transitory appeal. Adopting a singular approach to advising is not embracing critical thinking as a pedagogical approach; instead, it is adopting an ideology. Again, Gordon provided a means of operationalizing this stance decades ago. While broad learning goals can be reorganized as topics in an "advising curriculum," Gordon's approach also included the use of learning outcomes associated with activities that we might consider operational at an instructional level; these drove formative evaluations of students' progress. It is at this instructional level of advising that Gordon produced some of the most creative and overlooked content in the field of academic advising.

Gordon's balancing of teaching and learning would have also assisted scholars in writing on the assessment of academic advising. These authors have long noted the importance of the use of student-learning outcomes in program assessment (Campbell, 2008; Robbins, 2009a, 2009b; Robbins & Zarges, 2011; Troxel, 2008; Zarges, Adams, Higgins, & Muhovich, 2018). The ideal evidence of student learning is the direct evidence of learning they produce as learning outcomes. If advising is an intentional activity, this is essential. Historically, this evidence has been difficult to acquire because of the reliance on verbal communication forming the predominant basis of the interactions of advisors and advisees. It has been further thwarted by the reliance on advisors' notes to describe the advising interaction with the student. Using Gordon's approach, when students are engaged in activities, they need to respond in writing, and such evidence is produced. Perhaps with the adoption of learning technologies in the field of academic advising, the process of capturing and using this evidence of student learning might not be quite as difficult in the future. This author has suggested that technologies, such as learning management systems and e-portfolios, could help structure the advising process by having advisors organize their advising curricula with these tools while using the evaluation tools to encourage student critical thinking and acquire evidence of student learning (Steele, 2015, 2016, 2018). The adoption of such a process would provide a digital solution to the paper-based approach Gordon developed over 40 years ago.

Mark Twain is purported to have said, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes." The advising program that Virginia N. Gordon created in the late 1970s through the 1990s anticipated many of the essential ideas articulated over two decades later in the NACADA's Pillars of Academic Advising documents. That is not to say that Gordon was the originator of these ideas. Instead, as this article showed, these ideas have had a much longer history. Gordon's work shows how one creative and profoundly committed woman, who was dedicated to the cause of helping college students through a critical transitional period in their lives, masterfully applied a teaching and learning approach to an advising program, and having done so, created a foundation that those in the field of advising can build upon in their own time.

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