

The President Speaks. . .

"Two for the Seesaw Academic Advising and Research"

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It has been three years since the initial publication of the *NACADA Journal* (January 1981). During that period the National Academic Advising Association has made significant progress in the development of a professional organization for academic advisors in institutions of higher education. I would like to take this occasion, as the recently elected President of NACADA, to reflect and project on the nature and importance of research in academic advising. Upon reviewing my perspective, I hope you will also become enthusiastic and supportive of the need to expand our understanding of the key role research in advising will play in the future of higher education.

Previous research has already shown how academic advising is well-grounded in theory, and that it is properly viewed as a part of teaching at the post-secondary level.¹ Work has also been completed demonstrating the value of advising to teach decision-making skills; the value of peer advisors to supplement faculty and staff advising systems, and numerous related issues. However, the ground is still fresh for further comprehensive research in the field. We have just begun to dig the post holes to define the boundaries of this wide-open territory.

Cheryl Polson and Bill Cashin stated that much of the research to date has been based on surveys and systems analyses.² A more recent survey of academic advising literature from 1965 to 1982 further reinforced this summation of the state of the art.³ Analysis of

¹ Cheryl Polson and William E. Cashin, "Research Priorities for Academic Advising," *NACADA Journal* 1 (1981) 34-43.

² Polson and Cashin, "Research Priorities," p. 36

³ Bonnie McLaughlin and Emily Starr, "Academic Advising Literature Since 1965: A College Student Personnel Abstracts Review" in *NACADA Journal* 2 (1982) 14-23.

surveys has become more scientific, and the important relationship between advising and retention has forced many institutions to carefully examine their advising systems.' Many students and institutions now agree on the need for quality academic advising, making it much more acceptable to study and analyze for practical reasons.

In the practical realm of research in advising, a whole series of significant issues has been broached. They include:

- the relationship between career and academic advising;
- the question of who should do advising, faculty or professional advisors;
- the models for advising;
- the training and rewards;
- the evaluation;
- the coordination and management of advising; and many more related topics.'

There are many areas of educational theory related to student development, **teaching-learning**, mentoring, lifelong learning and **life-cycle** changes, which are only beginning to be studied and applied to the advisor-advisee relationship in higher education. Also, the previously studied practical issues, such as the relationship between academic advising and **life-cycle** advising, have not been studied in their more theoretical aspects. Much attention has been focused on the "nuts and bolts," but little on the "architectural plans," so to speak.

THE REWARDS FOR RESEARCH IN ADVISING

Recognition. NACADA is launching a significant national effort to encourage research in what we do and why we do it. In October 1983, the Second Annual Awards to outstanding researchers were announced. Two professional awards were given to Cheryl Polson of Kansas State University and John Borgard of Virginia Commonwealth University, and one award to Julie Dryden, a graduate student of Ohio State, for her work on the **Meyers-Briggs** Scale Indicator as a factor for analysis of the student-advisor relationship. NACADA will continue these awards, but this is not the only component of the rewards system.

Publication

Articles. There are numerous outlets for publication of research articles in advising. In addition to the *NACADA Journal*, there are other prominent journals. 1) the *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 2) the *NASPA Journal*, 3) *College and University*, 4) *Improving College and University Teaching*, 5) *Liberal Education*, and many more.

To encourage the more rapid exchange of ideas, *NACADA Journal* will add an associate editor to insure a rapid review and turnaround process for its publication. The feasibility of expanding the size of each issue to increase the amount published each year will also be considered.

Books. The ERIC Clearinghouse publishes monographs and Jossey-Bass

⁴ McLaughlin and Starr, "Academic Advising Literature Since 1965," 15-18.

⁵ McLaughlin and Starr, 18-19.

Publishers are encouraging more complete book-length studies. On the immediate horizon, for example, there is a book on *Academic Advising and Student Development*, projected for release by Jossey-Bass in 1984.

Presentation of Papers. During the annual meetings, NACADA will provide more time for presentation of research papers, and will use this forum to identify outstanding research methods, projects, and researchers to disseminate ideas and encourage professionals to engage in research. This will be a significant opportunity for professional development of our members and interaction with their peers.

Thus, on one end of the advising seesaw we have placed the weight of recognition, rewards, and other incentives for research. On the other end is the heavy weight of responsibility of day-to-day advising, which keeps us suspended from research, up in the air on the seesaw. The challenge for advisors in the next decade becomes one of trying to achieve a better balance of these weights to keep the seesaw moving up and down with a rhythmic balance of practical accomplishment, with **advisees** and scholarly research on the impact.

It is absolutely critical that advisors achieve this balance. Quality advising is significant for the well-being of students and we must try to do it better each time. The academic community relates **well** to research results, validating advising research, giving it a basis for acceptance and involvement by many within the community.

The advisee-advisor relationship is an educational model, one as old as the Greeks on their primitive logs, and one that is crucial for the success of higher education in the future. If we cannot maintain the balance between student and advisor, and advising and research, the seesaw will become stuck and the students may decide to leap off.

In the topsy-turvy competitive world of higher education today, it is difficult to maintain vision, balance, perspective, and a sense of principle. Remember, in the world of academic advising—it **still** takes two for the seesaw.