

legitimate and duly recognized.¹¹ Thus, advising coordinators, and the advising programs they coordinate, can contribute substantively to their institution's long-range prospects for maintaining, as well as stimulating, faculty vitality.

35 R.E. Rice, 1983, p. 50.

A Survey of Graduate Programs Addressing the Preparation of Professional Academic Advisors

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Interest in academic advising as an activity of consequence in American higher education has grown considerably in the past decade. A number of factors have been identified as contributing to this growth: the erosion of faculty interest in this activity because of increased demands for research and publication production; the assumption that quality academic advising is a significant part of institutional retention efforts; the changing nature of the student body; and, the evolution of academic advising from a routine activity to a complex process. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), the *NACADA Journal*, conferences, and nationally published articles and monographs about academic advising all attest to the attention that has been given to this activity. The emergence of the notion of academic advising as a profession has certainly been one of the major consequences of this increased interest.^{1,2}

Despite the current flurry of interest there still remains much that is not known about academic advising. It is recognized that some form of academic advising occurs on all college and university campuses, and that academic advising is performed by a wide range of personnel, including faculty and professional staff. Little is known, however, about formal educational preparation for academic advising. Academic advisors have begun to identify themselves with a national organization, research their activity, and communicate with each other at regional and national conferences; now the need to know who is preparing academic advisors, and how they are being prepared, becomes more pressing as the issue of professionalism is advanced.

This preliminary study investigates the extent to which graduate programs in higher education and college student personnel offer their students courses and/or practical experiences to prepare for positions as professional academic advisors.

1 Thomas J. Grites, *Academic Advising: Getting Us Through the Eighties* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, 1979).

2 Virginia N. Gordon, "Training Future Academic Advisors: One Model of a Pre-Service Approach," *NACADA Journal*, 2, No. 2 (November 1982), pp. 35-40.

METHOD

A list of 154 faculty designated as contact persons in higher education and college student personnel preparation programs was generated from a roster of Commission XII of the American College Personnel Association,¹ a directory of higher education graduate programs,² and a small supplementary list. A questionnaire was developed and mailed to each contact person in the winter of 1984.

Contact persons were asked to assess the extent to which the topic of undergraduate student academic advising was developed in the coursework, independent study, practicum or internship experiences, and consultative services. Titles, examples, or descriptions of such activities, as well as information on options not covered in the questionnaire, were requested from respondents.

A total of 115 (74.7%) questionnaires were returned, of which 106 (68.8%) were useable. These responses represented 103 faculty associated with programs of higher education and college student personnel preparation.

FINDINGS

Graduate Course Offerings

Table I presents responses to the three items related to coursework: courses scheduled on a regular basis, courses offered on an experimental or occasional basis, and segments of graduate courses. Although 24.5% of the respondents indicated that their programs offered graduate courses on a regular basis, an analysis of comments showed only five official courses listed by title as academic advising courses. The majority of courses identified in this category incorporated advising as a topic in departmental offerings such as student personnel administration, the college student, overviews of higher education, and specialized seminar courses addressing such issues as legal aspects of higher education, career development theory, the community college, and counselor education. A similar pattern existed for responses to the item on experimental or occasional graduate course offerings. Such courses were offered by 12.3% of the respondents' programs; however, only five courses were actually specified by title as academic advising courses. The ten courses whose main topic was academic advising included such titles as "Academic Advising in Higher Education," "Academic Advisement," and "Academic Advising/Learning Skills Seminar."

¹ Commission XII is the Professional Education of Student Personnel Workers in Higher Education.

² Marilyn Sherr and Lisa Hoogstra, *Directory of Higher Education Programs and Faculty* (Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, March, 1982).

TABLE I

ITEM	YES		NO		NO RESPONSE	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Graduate Courses Scheduled on a Regular Basis	*26	24.5	76	71.7	4	3.7
Graduate Courses Offered on an Experimental or Occasional Basis	*13	12.3	78	73.6	15	14.1
Segments of Graduate Courses Offered Based on Faculty Expertise in the Area of Academic Advising	58	54.7	43	40.5	5	4.7

* Five courses were specified by title as academic advising courses.

Independent Study and Practicum/Internship Experiences

Table II presents responses to the two items addressing more individualized options related to academic advising: independent study and practicum/internship experiences. Independent study options were offered by 70.7% of the respondents' programs. No opportunity for comments was provided on this item. The practicum or internship experience was provided by 83.9% of the respondents' programs. Comments on this item showed the most frequently offered experiences were in college, division, or departmental advising offices; in counseling centers for advising undeclared majors; or in special student services options such as remedial centers, orientation and summer registration programs, athletic advising, and minority student advising. Three respondents mentioned specific graduate assistantships in academic advising.

TABLE II

ITEM	YES		NO		NO RESPONSE	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Independent Study Option Offered	75	70.7	28	26.4	3	2.8
Practicum or Internship	89	83.9	16	15.1	1	0.9

Other Options

Table III presents responses to the item on advising-related options available to graduate students, with 22.6% of the respondents indicating that their programs provided such options. The options mentioned included student leader seminars about academic advising, advisor staff training, and career development and study skills seminars. One respondent mentioned a joint retention program with the institution's counseling center focusing on exit interviews, while another respondent described an institutional study of advising done by master's degree students.

TABLE III

ITEM	YES		NO		NO RESPONSE	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Other options offered	24	22.6	23	21.7	59	55.6

CONSULTATIVE SERVICES

Table IV presents responses to the item describing consultative services which the programs provided on a university-wide basis. Such services were offered by 35.8% of the respondents' programs, including activities such as faculty workshops, annual advising workshops, and special topics programs on vocational choice, study skills, or developmental theory.

TABLE IV

ITEM	YES		NO		NO RESPONSE	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Consultative Services Offered on a University- Wide Basis	38	35.8	63	59.4	5	4.7

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

The results of this study indicate that the activity of undergraduate student academic advising is addressed in higher education and college student personnel preparation programs via coursework, independent study, and experiences in practicum and internship settings. Few programs have entire courses on academic advising, but over half of the programs surveyed included the topic of advising in other course offerings. Over three quarters of the programs surveyed make use of the practicum and internship to expose students to practical experiences in academic advising settings.

Because the specific content of the academic advising topic was not assessed in this study, no report can be made of how advising is addressed in courses, or how it is structured or evaluated in the practicum and internship experience. Further investigation is needed to determine how academic advising is developed as a theoretical, historical, and administrative topic in coursework. In addition, with the apparent high incidence of academic advising provided via practical experiences, investigation is needed into the internship structure to determine how the intern becomes socialized to the role of the professional staff academic advisor, and what forms of evaluation are provided by the designated supervisor.

As the theory and the practice of academic advising are examined through course content and the internship experiences, it might be fruitful to identify varying approaches taken by higher education and college student personnel preparation programs. Such approaches may raise questions about the nature of professional academic advising, such as:

- 1) Should professional staff academic advising positions be considered similar to faculty positions; that is, should advisors perform within and be evaluated on the traditional faculty model of teaching, research, and service within a tenure and promotion structure?

- 2) Should professional staff academic advising positions be considered similar to student services positions; that is, should advisors perform within and be evaluated on the traditional student affairs model of service to students in a practitioner capacity?
- 3) Or, does the nature of academic advising in the university allow for a reformulation of the traditional faculty and student services models toward a "hybrid" model for professional staff academic advising positions?

The implications of the responses to these questions are significant because the nature of the education of future professional staff academic advisors may well be dictated by these answers.