

will continue to be a necessary, but not very highly regarded, contributor to higher education. Scenario number two: academic advising, like commuter airlines, will be drastically altered or eliminated as a result of the inability to compete for resources with other activities on the campus. Scenario number three: academic advising, like commuter airlines, will be recognized as a critical and respected function of the enterprise. In order for scenario number three to materialize I believe that significant challenges lie ahead of us in academic advising.

I would like to take a few minutes to discuss eight challenges for the future of academic advising.

Challenge number one. The development of a significant body of research which enhances our understanding, assists us in planning, and serves as a guide to our decision making. Until now we have had limited research which meets these needs. Much of our effort in advising has been focused on theories and concepts, show-and-tell, statistics which describe numbers and percentages, or experiential sharing of how to train, how to organize, how to evaluate, or how we did a particular thing on our campus and what the outcomes were.

It is interesting to note that we exist in the world's most complex intellectual communities. Yet we defend our existence with relatively untested theories, assumptions, and in some cases, platitudes about the importance of academic advising.

I wonder if there is a relationship between advisor styles and student satisfaction. I wonder if developmental theory can be applied to the way in which we train academic advisors. I wonder how the advising needs of nontraditional students differ from the advising needs of traditional students and how we can best meet those needs. I wonder if the organization of advising services has an impact on student utilization of those services. I wonder if you wonder enough to contribute to research in academic advising.

Challenge number two is closely related to challenge number one, to provide evidence that quality advising assists in producing specific and positive outcomes *other than persistence*. To date, the major outcome data supporting advising is linked to student persistence. But I am concerned that advising and retention are too closely entwined. Persistence is a complex issue but the survival mentality, coupled with the need for a quick-fix in persistence, and advising's all-too-willingness to latch on to the persistence bandwagon, has led us to assume that advising and persistence are almost synonymous. What happens to advising if persistence is not a critical campus issue? The answer is advising isn't an issue either. What happens to advising if persistence is a critical issue but enhancements in the advising system do not produce immediate and obvious retention gain? Really, the persistence sword cuts two ways. Advising can be the salvation of persistence but if persistence is not improved advising can also be the "whipping boy."

In reality persistence is a by-product of quality services for students and advising is but one of those quality services — a critical link in persistence, but not the entire chain. In order to meet this challenge we must show through research that quality advising leads to significant outcomes for students. Quality advising means more meaningful choice of major. Quality advising means more satisfactory entry into the post-baccalaureate world. Quality advising supports student learning.

Challenge number three is to arouse campus decision makers to action. Today our vice presidents and presidents are products of the undergraduate advising system of the 40's and

50's. Even in the year 2000 most of our decision makers will have been products of the traditional advising systems of the 60's. Taken from the *Handbook of College and University Administration*, edited by Asa Knowles, is a 60's definition of academic advising:

"The task of advising is concentrated in the opening days of registration and enrollment and consists of aiding students in the selection of courses."

This definition may indeed be true on some campuses today. The terms "developmental advising," "advising center," and "computer-assisted advising" are not necessarily parts of the leadership jargon today in higher education. Many advising proponents have taken advising's case to the decision makers and received verbal support but have not stimulated significant action on the advising front. In some ways we are experiencing the same feeling which was articulated to the Continental Congress in a dispatch from George Washington just prior to his defeat in defending New York City from British attack:

"I have been in expectation of receiving a response on the subject of my last fifteen dispatches. Is anybody there? Does anybody care? DOES ANYBODY CARE? Your humble and obedient, G. Washington."

Somehow we must find ways to get our ideas across, to provide workable and reasonable strategies for implementation, and to obtain from our decision makers and resource allocators a commitment to implement and support advising.

Challenge number four is to defend the value of advising during a predicted period of decline and retrenchment. This indeed may be our greatest challenge. As the competition for limited resources increases, the threat to existing advising systems takes three forms. The first threat is that advising is an extra. Advising, done by anyone but faculty, is a frill and we need to cut out all the frills. The second is a position defense. Let us shore up faculty positions with advising in the hope of forestalling future position loss. And the third is what is commonly called the faculty prerogative which holds that advising is solely a faculty responsibility. All students will be advised by faculty and all faculty will be advisors.

What is really required to meet the challenge of decline and retrenchment is creative leadership — leadership which forges agreements and understandings where none seem to exist. Leadership which orchestrates the internal and external variables leading to progress.

Challenge number five goes hand-in-hand with challenge number four, elevating the status of advising by faculty. Faculty advising will always be the dominant source for the delivery of advising services. It is neither desirable nor possible to presume otherwise. Yet, on many campuses advising administrators and faculty advisors have been adversaries. There are several reasons for this adversarial relationship. First, the increased focus on advising indicates that faculty have not been doing their job. Second, in light of this revelation, some faculty have responded skeptically, others cynically, to attempts to improve advising. Third, some dislike any hint of centralization, and some dislike any hint of change. Finally, some feel that the only advising is faculty advising.

Although advising has changed dramatically during the last thirty years, the concerns regarding faculty advising have remained hauntingly constant. In 1954, Esther Lloyd-Jones wrote in a book on involvement of faculty in student development:

"Because some faculty are either unskilled or have little interest in the student outside the classroom, advising becomes a mere clerical routine of program planning."

In 1980 Toni Trombley, the first president of NACADA, addressed the National Conference of the American Association for Higher Education. She said:

"Some faculty may not have or be interested in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to become excellent advisors."

The key to elevating the status of faculty advising and faculty advisors is 1) to involve only those who desire to serve; 2) to provide comprehensive pre-service and in-service education; 3) to thoroughly evaluate the work of the advisors; and 4) most importantly to reward that work. This approach to improving faculty advising has been advocated for the last twenty years; yet, few campuses seem to be making any major inroads to provide a significant reward for faculty advising.

I want to repeat challenge number five — we must elevate the status of advising by faculty.

Challenge number six is the appropriate utilization of technology to enhance the effectiveness of the advising program. Currently, I am seeing some confusion between the words "efficiency" and "effectiveness" as they apply to advising. To illustrate this confusion, I will use the example of several efficiency experts who were dispatched to critique a performance of Schubert's Ninth Symphony. Following the performance, the efficiency experts noted that four oboes did nothing for long periods of time. Twelve violins all played the same part. And shortly after the violins were done playing their part, three trumpets repeated almost everything that the violins played. The conclusion of the experts was that efficiency would best be served by eliminating three-quarters of the musicians and by cutting twenty-nine minutes from Schubert's Ninth Symphony. Certainly their response was more efficient, but it was clearly *not* more effective.

Let me give another example of the difference between efficiency and effectiveness by looking at computer-assisted advising, or what some people call the automated degree audit. To an advising administrator the automated degree audit is a tool which enhances the interaction between the advisor and student. However, after visiting many college campuses, I have concluded that the definition of computer-assisted advising by the overworked and harried advisor is "the tool which will require less time for advising." In a sense, this attitude leads to using technology to supplant, rather than support academic advising, relying on the age-old definition of academic advising as merely selecting and scheduling courses. A computer-assisted process, utilizing the traditional definition of advising for selection and scheduling is seen as a way in which faculty or other advisors can spend less time in interaction with the student. Computer-assisted advising increases efficiency, but does not necessarily increase effectiveness.

I'm reminded of one of Naisbitt's megatrends which he calls "high tech/high touch." A brief definition of that megatrend is that whenever new technology is introduced there must be a counterbalancing human response or the technology will be rejected. I am concerned that in the use of technology in advising, "high tech/high touch" will turn into "high tech/no touch."

A second example of the utilization of technology is the notion that a new computer will enable us to cut the amount of time spent in registration. I suggest that knowing the number of students your registration system is capable of handling per hour is not the same as knowing the number of students who can be advised in an hour. In this case, the system defines the process — the tail wags the dog.

I think you can always make an effective system more efficient but you will have a difficult time making an efficient system more effective. In other words, the real challenge is **DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES WHICH FIT ADVISING AND NOT FITTING ADVISING INTO DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES.**

Challenge number seven is advancing advising as a profession. In order to assess our current status as a profession, I would like to focus on several basic characteristics of a profession and analyze them in terms of academic advising.

- The first characteristic of a profession is a set of standards — commonly held expectations which are applied to advising activity. For this particular characteristic I suggest that we do indeed have a set of standards as developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards and the National Academic Advising Association. But I would suggest that the key here is that those standards are not commonly held across advising systems throughout the nation.
- The second characteristic of a profession is that it has a conceptual base; a set of commonly held concepts, theories, and practices which guide our actions. Again, the answer is yes, there are some basic concepts, theories, and practices which guide our actions, but again, they are not commonly held throughout advising systems in the United States.
- A third characteristic of a profession is the method of entry into the profession or a core of learning experiences expected for those who enter the field. Let me do an audience poll to see if there is any commonality in terms when entering the field of advising. Let me ask, how many of you have had undergraduate majors in the sciences? How many in humanities? How many in fine arts? And how many in the social sciences? There is quite a distribution across this audience and I'm sure that each of you has a story to tell about how you got involved in academic advising. Even though diversity can be considered a strong asset in advising systems, I'm concerned that there is no common understanding about a set of solid core skills which prepare one for the advising profession.
- The fourth characteristic of a profession is that it includes a significant number of individuals who have both a length of commitment to and a depth of understanding of the field. Because advising is a relatively new field and there is a lack of career mobility (which will be discussed in challenge number eight), advising has few individuals who have *BOTH* the length of commitment and the depth of understanding which would allow us the liberty of claiming that we meet this criterion. Certainly, we have committed practitioners, but few have demonstrated that commitment over an extended period of time. Certainly, we have practitioners who exhibit a depth of understanding of the field, but we need many more of those individuals if we are to have a sustained impact on higher education.
- The fifth and final characteristic of a profession is also one that we meet in advising — that there is an identifiable group of clients. Our clients are students!

We really have a long way to go before we meet all the characteristics of a profession. However, with the commonly held standards; good conceptual bases; training programs for learning experiences; allegiance to a career oriented field, advising will be more than an activity, more than a job; advising would be a role. The development of these advising characteristics will strengthen our profession.

That leads me to the final challenge — *challenge number eight* — establishing advising as a career. First of all let me pose three questions about advising as a career. The first question: is there a career ladder within a particular institution related to advising? I believe that the answer is no. The advising program usually consists of a group of advisors and, on some campuses, a director or coordinator of advising. Advising systems are essentially flat structures where the only position to which an advisor may aspire is that of director or coordinator. Since there are limited opportunities to rise from the position of director or coordinator, mobility within the institution can hardly be characterized as a career ladder.

Second, is there transferability of advising skills from one institution to another? The answer is a resounding *NO*. The prevailing perceptions among those who hire advising personnel are that advising is a set of information skills; information skills are institutionally specific and therefore, it is best to hire staff within the institution. Let me ask, how many of you have been an advisor at one institution and moved to another institution? How many of you have been an advisor at one institution and moved to administrative responsibility for advising at another institution? How many of you have had administrative responsibility for advising at one institution and administrative responsibility at a new institution? What I'm saying is that there is little recognition of the transferability of skills in the advising profession. Again, individuals responsible for hiring advising personnel rely on the traditional and pervasive, but woefully incomplete, notion that advising is information, information is institutional, therefore anyone who moves up in this advising hierarchy must intimately understand and be knowledgeable about this institution's academic programs.

The third and final question I have regarding establishing advising as a career is to pose the question "from advising to — where?" I've come to the conclusion that advising is neither "fish nor fowl." To academic affairs personnel, advising is an activity which is subsumed under a number of functions in which faculty are involved. Therefore anyone who is a practitioner in advising has a set of narrowly focused and unusable skills. Anyone who has been a faculty advisor and is capable of understanding faculty advising can indeed lead or run an institutional program.

It's not a student affairs activity. The student affairs people say, "No, it's not financial aid, counseling, career planning and placement, admissions or any of the traditional student affairs functions. Academic advising really is a faculty responsibility and therefore, we shouldn't get into it."

A result of being neither "fish nor fowl" is that the talented and upwardly mobile advising administrator really has nowhere to go. And if that person has nowhere to go, there is a limited impact on the decision-making chain. If the capable advising administrator is not able to move into an assistant vice presidency or a vice presidency, the impact of knowledge and understanding of advising is short-circuited and the decision makers and the resource allocators at a given institution who have a limited knowledge of advising, will not support it as a career.

When assessing advising as a career it is interesting to note that NACADA is now seven years old, and that three-quarters of the original four hundred and thirty-five charter members no longer belong. Approximately two-thirds of all lapsed NACADA memberships came about because people moved out of the advising field. Advising is a field that many people enter, and after a period of time, move on. Those who remain that are talented in the field, but have limited career opportunities, should be encouraged to work and make the advising profession more career oriented.

To meet this challenge we must identify and nurture bright, energetic, and creative individuals to enter and, more importantly to persist in the field of academic advising.

Let me close now by returning to the three scenarios I presented at the beginning of this address. Whether advising continues as a low status and perfunctory activity, whether advising is drastically eroded by the tides of retrenchment, or whether advising continues to be recognized, respected, rewarded and full partner in the higher education enterprise will be the result of what we, as practitioners, accomplish in the foreseeable future.

The challenges before us are complex but they are not insurmountable. There are ways to strengthen our profession: we must attract and keep creative and energetic individuals in advising. We must provide them with significant preparation experiences. We must provide them with definitive, yet flexible guidelines for action. We must support them with research and most of all we must urge them into the future. We must continue to serve our students — "our clients."

My final challenge to you is let us work together to stabilize advising's significant role in higher education.