

TABLE II
HOUSTON BAPTIST UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Course	Degree Desired (Circle One)					
	B.A.	B.S.	B.S.N.	B.M.E.	B.Mus.	B.Acc.
(x = a degree requirement)						
Basic Science						
BASC 1414 Natural Science	NA	X	X	NA	NA	X*
BASC 1424 Natural Science	NA	X	X	NA	NA	X*
Biology						
BIOL 2413 Human Anal. & Phys.	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA
BIOL 2423 Human Anal. & Phys.	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA
BIOL 3414 Microbiology	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA
Christianity						
CHRI 1313 Old Testament	X	X	X	X	X	X
CHRI 1323 New Testament	X	X	X	X	X	X
CHRI 2333 Christian Doctrine	X	X	X	X	X	X
Computer Science						
CISM 1321 Intro. to Computer Systems	X	X	X	X	X	X
English						
ENGL 1313 Composition & Lit.	X	X	X	X	X	X
ENGL 1323 Composition & Lit.	X	X	X	X	X	X
ENGL 2313 World Literature	X	X	X	X	X	X
ENGL 2323 World Literature	X	X	X	X	X	X
Foreign Language						
FREN, GERM, GREK, SPAN Foreign Lang.	X	NA	NA	X	X	X*
FREN, GERM, GREK, SPAN Foreign Lang.	X	NA	NA	X	X	X*
Interdisciplinary Course (Six semester hours)						
INDC 3301, 3302 (Culture and Human	X	X	X	X	NA	X
3303, 3304 Experience and/or	X	X	X	X	NA	X
3311, 3312 Great Issues of the	X	X	X	X	NA	X
3313, 3314 Twentieth Century)	X	X	X	X	NA	X
Mathematics						
MATH 1313 College Algebra	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	X
Physical Education						
PHED 2111 Activity Course	X	X	X	X	X	X
PHED 2111 Activity Course	X	X	X	X	X	X
Physics						
PHYS 1303 Physics of Sound	NA	NA	NA	X	X	NA
Social/Behavioral Science						
Six semester hours from						
ECON 1301 American Econ. System	X	X	X	X	X	X
POLS 2313 Amer./Texas Government	X	X	X	X	X	X
or						
Six semester hours from						
HIST 2313 U.S. History	X	X	X	X	X	X
HIST 2323 U.S. History	X	X	X	X	X	X
PSYC 1313 General Psychology	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA
PSYC 3313 Human Growth & Development	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA
SOC 1313 Principles of Sociology	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	NA
Speech						
SPCH 1313 Communication Process	X	X	NA	NA	NA	X

* Two courses in a physical science with laboratories or six semester hours in one foreign language.

** Six semester hours in one foreign language.

*** This course is required for teacher certification candidates regardless of degree program.
For specific details, please see the current Houston Baptist University Bulletin of Information.

Academic Advising: And Different Expectations

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INTRODUCTION

It does not take long to review the literature on academic advising and get an idea of its general status across the nation. McLaughlin and Starr reviewed advising literature and concluded that students are "dissatisfied overwhelmingly with their academic advising."¹ Polson and Jurick claimed that "almost every recent study of undergraduate education has cited the poor quality of academic advising as a major problem."² Bostaph and Moore examined three distinctively different advising systems and found that a majority of students perceived their overall advising experiences negatively, regardless of the advising method.³

Academic advisors wonder what they are doing wrong, or what their colleagues are doing wrong. Each thinks surely his or her own students realize what fine advising they receive and those negative perceptions about the quality of advising must be based on the performance of other advisors. Yet, such widespread consensus on the general state of academic advising causes many to conclude that advisors in general are performing poorly. People say that they are. Satisfaction with advising is consistently low. How can so many different people on so many different campuses be doing such a bad job?

The administrator responsible for academic advising recognizes the problem and wonders what to try next. Faculty say that full-time non-teaching advisors do not understand the students' academic needs, and the career implications of the curricula. Students complain to the administrator that the faculty advisor is never in the office, and when in the office, is too busy with research and grading papers to help with advising.

1 Bonnie M. McLaughlin and Emily A. Starr, "Academic Advising Literature Since 1965: A College Student Personnel Abstracts Review," *NACADA Journal*, 48 Nov. 1982: 13.

2 Cheryl Polson and Anthony Jurick, "The Impact of Advising Skills Upon the Effectiveness of the Departmental Academic Advising Centers," *NACADA Journal*, 1 Sept. 1981: 48.

3 C. Bostaph and M. Moore, "Training Academic Advisors: A Developmental Strategy," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21 Jan. 1980: 45-49.

BACKGROUND

In professional meetings administrators concerned with academic advising have examined the negative attitudes toward advising. They have identified some of the obvious factors that contribute to the poor image of advising. These factors include lack of administrative support for advising; limited university resources; non-existent or limited rewards for high quality advising; and, the low priority of advising on most campuses. Although the general functions of the advisor are also discussed in professional meetings, the specifics of what advisors do are usually not a topic. Nor is the lack of consensus about the advisor's role generally identified as a factor contributing to the poor status of advising. However, a very real cause of the problem may be that the various people who have business with advising do not know what the responsibilities of the advisor are.

Hardee, O'Banion, Crockett, Larson and Brown are among those who have attempted to define the role of the advisor in the professional literature.^{4,5,6,7} Most definitions of the advising process are general, and opinions vary, even among professionals, and not many students have read the professional literature on the subject. There may also be a question about how much reading on the subject administrators and advisors do. Dunham "discovered no general agreement or consensus as to precisely what academic advisors should do."⁸ Students enter the advising process with a set of perceptions and expectations that may be quite unrelated to those of the advisor.

An advising evaluation instrument itself can be considered a source of role definition, but to be practical, most instruments are too general. An example would be the question, "Is your advisor helpful?" The student responds, "My advisor was not helpful." Was this response because the advisor did not write out the student's schedule? Was it because the advisor would not or could not find that 10:40 class the student needed to make the perfect schedule? Was it because the advisor did not direct students to the kinds of instructors they wanted? In general, could it have been for failure of the advisor to "help" in ways the advisor may not have perceived as appropriate? Although an advising evaluation instrument may be a form of role definition, there is still a good deal of room to interpret the implications of the responsibilities included.

Academic advising is often considered lousy because students say it is. But is it really? Administrators do not often have the opportunity to observe the advising process first hand. What they know about advising is often second hand, based on formal or informal student feedback. The informal feedback is frequently in the form of student complaints. People who are satisfied do not seem to be as vocal as those who are dissatisfied. In one form or another, evaluation takes place; then from that, conclusions are drawn.

METHOD

To test the likely hypothesis that differing perceptions of the role and responsibilities of the advisor do exist, in 1984 an Advising Role and Responsibility Inventory was developed and administered. It included 52 statements of advisors' responsibilities. For each statement, the

4 M.D. Hardee, "Faculty Advising in Colleges and Universities," American College Personnel Association, Student Personnel Series No. 9, 1970.

5 T. O'Banion, "An Academic Advising Model," *Junior College Journal*, 42 (1972): 66-69.
David Crockett, *Academic Advising: A Resource Document*, American College Testing Program 1978.

7 M.D. Larsen and B. Brown, "Student and Faculty Expectations of Academic Advising," *NACADA Journal*, 3 March 1983: 31-37.

8 Barbara J. Dunham, "What's an Advisor to Do?" *NACADA Journal*, 1 Sept. 1981: 9.

respondents were asked to indicate one of the following: (P) The advisor has primary responsibility for this function; (S) The advisor shares with others in performing this function; or (N) The advisor has no responsibility for this function. (See Table II).

The population of the study consisted of students, faculty, and administrators from a four-year, comprehensive, state-supported, midwestern university. Classes which would likely include students with majors from each of the five colleges on the campus and classes which would include students from each classification of freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate were identified and a random selection of sections made. The Inventory was administered to these classes. Forms of the Inventory were sent to full-time instructional faculty and administrators who have a working relationship with academic advising. Respondents consisted of 620 students, 171 faculty, and 68 administrators.

RESULTS

From this Inventory, it was learned that the academic advisor, full-time professional or part-time faculty, cannot be all things to all people on campus. Faculty, students, and administrators do not agree on the advisors' responsibilities. These three groups' different expectations from those of advisors are indicative of the problems.

The summary contains a few of the findings; many others are not presented here; and all suggest good reasons why advisors receive so much criticism. Criticism and problems with evaluation can be expected when the academic community does not agree about what advisors do.

A high percentage of respondents indicated the advisor had no responsibility for five items on the Inventory. Table I lists these five responsibilities. The two items that were most frequently rejected as advisors' responsibilities were "recommend specific instructor" and "counsel about personal concerns." An examination of each of the five items in Table I gives some insight into the conflicting role and differing perceptions under which advisors are operating.

TABLE I
Functions Respondents Indicated As
Not An Advisor Responsibility

The advisor has no responsibility to:

	Students	Faculty	Administrator
Recommend specific instructor	47%	77%	88%
Counsel about personal concerns	58%	55%	66%
Write letters of recommendation	36%	65%	62%
Acquaint advisee with extra-curricular activities	46%	43%	44%
Help advisee explore life goals	45%	28%	22%

One "hot potato" on the Inventory was the question of responsibility for recommending instructors to students. Participants in the study were asked what responsibility the advisor had for recommendation of specific instructors. Over 50 percent of the students felt that the

advisor had a primary or shared responsibility for recommendation of specific instructors of the classes they took. However, 77 percent of the faculty and 80 percent of the administrators indicated the advisor had no responsibility for recommending an instructor. This obvious disagreement between students and faculty and administrators regarding the role of advisors pinpoints a never-ending dilemma for the advisor: should the advisor recommend an instructor or refuse to recommend an instructor? If the advisor recommends an instructor, a majority of administrators and faculty will feel the advisor is "overdoing"; whereas, if the advisor does not recommend an instructor, the majority of students will feel that the advisor is not adequately performing a responsibility.

TABLE II
ADVISING ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY INVENTORY

The Advising Role and Responsibility Inventory contains a series of statements which may be considered some of the functions of the academic advisor. This inventory is designed to assess what you think the functions or responsibilities of the academic advisor should be. IT IS NOT DESIGNED TO EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR.

Please circle the appropriate answer. (Student Form)

A. Sex (1) Male (2) Female

B. Age (1) 27 or less (2) More than 27

C. Marital Status (1) Single (2) Married (3) Divorced/Widowed

D. Classification (1) Freshmen (2) Sophomore (3) Junior (4) Senior (5) Graduate

E. Number of classes you usually take (1) 1 to 2 (2) 3 or more

F. Employment status by hours ... (1) 30 or less (2) More than 30

G. Major School .. (1) Business (2) Education (3) Liberal Arts (4) Math & Science (5) Special Arts & Sciences (6) Undecided

Please read each of the statements and answer according to the following:

- P — The advisor has primary responsibility for this function.
S — The advisor shares with others in performing this function.
N — The advisor has no responsibility for this function.

Indicate your opinion by drawing a circle around the P, S or N. Please circle only one letter for each statement.

- P S N (1) Suggest courses.
P S N (2) Help evaluate semester academic load in relation to other factors.
P S N (3) Recommend elective courses which might be beneficial.

TABLE II (CONTINUED)

- P S N (4) Authorize "drops."
P S N (5) Authorize "adds."
P S N (6) Guide course selection in terms of advisees' characteristics and needs.
P S N (7) Sign course schedule for each semester enrollment.
P S N (8) Advise against taking inappropriate courses.
P S N (9) Counsel advisee on implications of schedule changes.
P S N (10) Help advisee formulate a schedule based on his/her time restrictions.
P S N (11) Guide advisee with undecided major to courses which may help to decide area of interest.
P S N (12) Recommend courses which may be helpful in later work or later study.
P S N (13) Help advisee explore life goals or values.
P S N (14) Know educational backgrounds needed for careers.
P S N (15) Provide information about job markets.
P S N (16) Help advisee select a major.
P S N (17) Provide information about course content.
P S N (18) Provide pertinent registration details (e.g. how to obtain instructor permissions, initiate irregular enrollments).
P S N (19) Provide information about prerequisites for graduate studies.
P S N (20) Recommend specific instructors.
P S N (21) Review with each advisee the requirements for graduation.
P S N (22) Define the advisee's role in advisement process.
P S N (23) Refer to other campus offices as resources when appropriate.
P S N (24) Define advisor's role in the advisement process.
P S N (25) Provide information about transferring to another school.
P S N (26) Explain general education courses as they relate to major.
P S N (27) Explain general education courses as they relate to preparation for life pursuits.
P S N (28) Orient advisee to university procedures (parking, financial aid, etc.).
P S N (29) Assist advisee with awareness of deadlines which affect him/her.
P S N (30) Explain existence of certain general education or major requirements.
P S N (31) Acquaint advisee with extracurricular activities.
P S N (32) Communicate students' needs to university personnel.
P S N (33) Maintain confidentiality of records about advisee.
P S N (34) Maintain an advisement file for each advisee.
P S N (35) Evaluate transcripts in relation to degree requirements.
P S N (36) Recommend course substitutions or other degree requirements.
P S N (37) Orient advisee to use of class schedule.
P S N (38) Write letters of recommendation.
P S N (39) Communicate academic information about advisee to appropriate professionals.
P S N (40) Attend in-service and professional meetings.
P S N (41) Keep up-to-date catalog information available for advisees.
P S N (42) Relate ACT/SAT scores to course selection.
P S N (43) Apprise the advisee of the opportunity for remedial or honor classes.
P S N (44) Review with advisee his/her academic performance.

TABLE II (CONTINUED)

P	S	N	(45)	Assist the advisee in setting a timetable for reaching educational goals.
P	S	N	(46)	Suggest the need to improve study skills when necessary.
P	S	N	(47)	Recommend advisee attempt advanced standing examination(s).
P	S	N	(48)	Demonstrate interest in the advisee as an individual.
P	S	N	(49)	Assist advisee in development of decision-making skills.
P	S	N	(50)	Assist in self-understanding and self-acceptance.
P	S	N	(51)	Counsel about personal concerns.
P	S	N	(52)	Encourage maximum use of abilities.

Thank you for taking time to complete the inventory.
Please return to your instructor.

Over half of each of the three groups polled in the study indicated the advisor should not have the responsibility to counsel about personal concerns. Yet, about 42 percent of the students, 45 percent of the faculty, and 34 percent of the administrators indicated the advisor has at least some role in the matter of personal counseling. On a campus of 10,000 students, some 4,200 students may expect their advisor to be involved in this type of activity. This area would be representative of those areas in which fewer administrators see the advisor involved than do students.

Another of the Inventory items on which there was considerable disagreement between students and administrators was writing letters of recommendation. Whereas the majority of administrators and faculty indicated that advisors should not have responsibility for writing letters of recommendation (62 and 65 percent respectively), only 36 percent of the students indicated this should not be an advisor's role. Again, the implication of conflict is obvious and the perplexed advisor ponders over what to do.

University personnel in student services with the responsibility for making their students aware of the various campus extracurricular activities should not automatically count on advising to be of help. Almost one-half of each of the three groups indicate the advisors had responsibility for informing their advisees of various campus activities, because other resources must be considered when there is a need to communicate information about campus activities.

Helping the advisee explore life goals or values was another function many do not perceive as a direct responsibility of the advisor. Almost one-half of the students did not perceive this as an advisor's responsibility. One wonders about the problems students have as they relate majors and specific classes to future vocational and avocational pursuits. If the advisor does not assume this responsibility, what department in the institution is available to work with students to help them correlate their academic goals with life goals? Exploration of life goals and counseling for personal concerns often require immediate direction; the urgency of the situation does not always permit referral time. The primary problem here is that the other one-half of the students think the advisor should assume the responsibility for helping them explore life goals. Finally, no other helping agency within a university structure has the opportunity for formal contact each semester with students throughout their academic career. This consistency of contact provides the academic advisor an opportunity to develop the personal relationship with students that is not as easily developed by other campus professionals.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature pertinent to this Inventory and the Inventory itself inclines toward the conclusion that there are diverse opinions about the advisor's responsibilities. What can advisors do to overcome the differences of opinion about their responsibilities? First, if advising staff cannot come to some agreement on their responsibilities, they cannot function as a positive decision-making force. The saying that "It is better to write your own job description and criteria for evaluation than have someone else write it for you" may be most apropos. Second, the decision-makers on campus must join with others to identify advisors' primary job functions. When these functions or responsibilities are identified, they should be disseminated to faculty, students, and administrators, and a formal system to keep new members of the campus informed is recommended.

This article has attempted to point out that as long as members of the campus community disagree and/or have different understandings of the functions of academic advisors, advising program evaluations will have little meaning. Although advisors are evaluated by students, faculty, and administrators, the study has indicated continued disagreement among them about their role. Not only were significant differences found among the three groups, but also within these groups, and these differences in perceptions of the role of the advisor have important implications for evaluation. Advisors may be evaluated not only by students with differing opinions of their role, but, also, for tenure or promotion purposes by peers and administrators with perceptions that differ. Also, the expectations of the administrators working with an advisor may well differ from an advisor's peers.

Is advising really as bad as people suggest? It may not be. Although the advising role may be distorted by the vantage point from which the advisor is observed, it is an integral part of a successful educational community. The discrepancy in advising roles lies within the areas of educational community from which the advisor is observed. The solution to the advisor's dilemma can be achieved only when all members of the advisor's educational family come to a consensus of what the advising role shall be. However, every educational facility is unique; therefore, the advisor's responsibilities, although general in scope, need to reflect that uniqueness appropriate to the institution which the advisor serves. Only after there is institutional consensus will evaluation have meaning and validity.