Academic Advising as Teaching: A Key to Student Success

Nancy S. King, Ph.D.
Kennesaw State University

Questions
1. What is academic advising?
2. Whose responsibility is it?
3. How can it be done well?

"Advising is a process with a long and dignified history in colleges and universities. At the same time, involving as it often does tedious clerical work combined with hit-and-run conferences with students on curricula, it is a most cordially hated activity by the majority of college teachers."

M. S. MacLean
Personnel & Guidance Journal
1953
"The task of advising is concentrated in the opening days of registration and enrollment and consists of aiding students in the selection of courses."

*Handbook of College and University Administrators*
*Asa Knowles, Editor*
*1960*

**Advising is NOT:**
1. Primarily an administrative function or paper relationship
2. Obtaining a signature or PIN number to schedule classes

**Advising is NOT:**
3. A conference held once a year -- "The 1,000 mile check-up"
4. A judgmental process or a dictatorship

**Advising is NOT:**
5. Personal counseling
6. Supplementary to the educational mission of the institution
7. Something anyone can or should do without some specific training
"People will forget what you say. They will even forget what you do. But they never forget how you made them feel."

*Maya Angelou*

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**A Central Question to Consider**

"If students are the focus, why aren't more colleges and universities organized to make informed and personalized contact with students a priority?"

*K. E. Dillim*

*Innovations in Student Services*  
2002

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**Advising Plays a Critical Role in Establishing this Priority**

"Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience."

*Richard Light*

*Making the Most of College*  
2001

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"Advising is viewed as a way to connect students to the campus and help them feel that someone is looking out for them."

*George Kuh*

*Student Success in College*  
2005
Developmental Advising
A Definition

A systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the use of the full range of institutional and community resources.

*Academic advising is a means, not an end. When advising is based on shared responsibility and designed to help students discover meaningful academic plans, then courses and schedules become tools, not products of the advising relationship... In the process of designing plans, students can learn to frame appropriate questions, seek out needed information, and learn decision-making skills.*

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Two Assumptions of Developmental Advising

✓ Advising can serve not only as a method of selecting courses, but also as a means of facilitating student learning and success.

✓ Student development theory supports an individualized system of advising. Students benefit from meaningful relationships with advisors and from deliberate efforts to involve students in learning. Academic advisors can be a mechanism to involve students in learning.
"Higher learning provides an opportunity for developing persons to plan to achieve self-fulfilling lives. Teaching includes any experience that contributes to individual growth and that can be evaluated. The student should not be a passive receptacle of knowledge, but should share responsibility for learning with the teacher."

Chickering's Seven Vectors

- Developing competence
- Developing autonomy
- Developing purpose
- Managing emotions
- Establishing identity
- Developing mature interpersonal relationships
- Developing integrity

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Advising

I. Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Advising</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of subject matter</td>
<td>Knowledge of institutional policies, procedures, programs of study, referral sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and organization of course material</td>
<td>Preparing for advising meetings</td>
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Teaching

- Engaging students in actual participation in their learning
- Giving students feedback on their progress
- Helping students learn to analyze and problem solve

Advising

- Guiding students to be self-directed and autonomous
- Working together the advisor and student regularly evaluate the student's goals and progress toward those goals
- Assisting students in decision-making skills
II. Communication

**Teaching**
- Clarity of presentation of subject matter
- Establish dialogue with students in the classroom
- Demonstrating excellent listening skills, not simply a "talking head"

**Advising**
- Sharing information in a clear manner
- Leading students to question and interact with the advisor
- Listening both to what advisees are saying verbally and non-verbally

III. Attitudes for both Teaching and Advising

- Treats students with respect and concern
- Is accessible and available to students outside the classroom
- Offers regular encouragement
- Acts as a role model for students in the higher education process

"My role as a teacher changes very little from that of an advisor. In both roles I feel a responsibility to students for matters contributing to their success that involves much more than mere mastery of the subject matter. In the teacher role, I advise, refer, listen and encourage. Perhaps it is the meshing of the advising-teaching roles that creates the mentoring relationship."

Dr. Beverly Mitchell
Kennesaw State University Professor

At the Heart of Mentoring...
The Art of Conversation

Definition:
The art of conversation is the ability to create a dialogue that others will willingly join.

Whyte, 2004
"Five Conversations on the Frontiers of Leadership"
The Language is Essential to Conversation

"You cannot enter any world for which you do not have the language."

Wittgenstein

Advisors teach students the language of higher education to help them navigate the system.

Three Basic Types of Conversations Advisors Have with Students

1. Conversations that are informational
   - University policies and procedures
   - Requirements
   - Important dates and deadlines
   - Programs of study

Too often advising conversations stop here and do not progress to the next two types.

2. Conversations about the individual student
   - Core values
   - Aptitudes/interests
   - Strengths
   - Areas for improvement (i.e., study skills, time management)
   - Level of involvement in the life of the university

3. Conversations about the future
   - Goal-setting and posing questions
   - What do you want your future to be? (career and personal life)
   - What steps do you need to take to make this future a reality?
   - How are you changing as a result of your education?
   - Relevance of education to your future (online career portfolio)
Questions Students Need to Address

Who Am I?

- Need for self-reflection and behavioral awareness
- Personality/Interest inventories/Learning styles
- Values clarification

What do I want to do with my life?

- Goal-setting - short-term and long-term
- Career exploration
- Program of study exploration

What do I need to do in order to meet my goals?

- Decision-making skills
- Major selection
- Time management skills
- Study skills

How can this institution help me reach my goals?

- Referral sources
- Campus involvement
- Interaction with faculty and staff
Basic Elements in Developing and Implementing a Successful Academic Advising Program

✓ Administrative support
✓ Development of institutional advising mission
✓ Selection and training of advisors
✓ Recognition/reward system
✓ Development of advising materials (handbook, advising resources, information about advisees)
✓ Assessment of effectiveness

Advisors Contribute to Creating Campus Community

"The Boyer Model"

✓ A purposeful community
  ➢ Shared learning goals
  ➢ Active not passive learning
✓ An open community
  ➢ Nurture freedom of expression
  ➢ Affirm civility

✓ A just community
  ➢ Affirm diversity
  ➢ Avoid prejudice and arrogance
✓ A disciplined community
  ➢ Well-defined governance
  ➢ Individual responsibility for the common good
✓ A caring community
  ➢ Cultivate a sense of connection between students and campus
  ➢ Emphasis on relationship building

✓ A celebrative community
  ➢ Value traditions
  ➢ Celebrate student success

Ernest Boyer
1990

"By celebrating success, we create a culture of success."
Areas for Improvement

1. We need to do a better job of plugging our students into the resources of our institutions. We must know more than our own departments if we are to be truly helpful to students.

2. We need to do a better job of providing more accurate information to our students, and that means staying abreast of curriculum changes and rules and regulations.

3. We need to do a better job of integrating advising with career planning. We must help students see the connection between their skills and interests and the requirements for a particular career.

4. We need to do a better job of explaining to our students the meaning and purpose of a college education beyond career preparation. If we do our jobs well, we can help them see that education is more than "job training."

5. We need to do a better job of listening to our students. Being a good listener contributes a great deal to being a good advisor.

6. We need to do a better job of establishing relationships with our students. A caring advisor who gets to know advisees is one who has the opportunity to have a positive impact on students’ lives and one they will remember long after their college days are over.

What Do Students Want From An Advisor?

- Accurate Information "Do they know?"
- Accessibility "Are they there?"
- Caring Attitude "Do they care?"
Conclusions

✓ The most effective advising is not simply a clerical or scheduling function. It is, in fact, focused on teaching and learning.
✓ Ideally everyone in an institution has a stake in creating a campus culture that facilitates student success.
✓ Successful advising programs can intentionally enhance student learning and contribute to a positive campus environment.

The questions we raise, the perceptions we share, the resources we suggest, the short-term decisions and long-range plans we help them think through, all should aim to increase their capacity to take charge.

Chickering (1994)

Long after students have left college, the one thing they tend to remember from their college experience is the gift of self.

John Gardner