



Northern Illinois University

“Academic Advising is a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of education plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor. The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic process review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary.”



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Paradigm Shift in Academic Advising...

The new paradigm is that academic advisors must now serve in the role of advocator, mediator, orchestrator, intervener, and monitorer of student progress.

First college representative to interact with new students...students feel a connection, which means they can impact retention—positively or negatively.

Advisors = **Educational Planners**

- Assist students in developing competencies and knowledge relative to enrollment and transition to the college
- Function as a specialist who advises students in registration as well as graduation requirements and academic standards
- Cross-trained to understand policies and resources across campus—financial aid, withdrawal policies,

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“Moreover, advisors and administrators described the importance of constructing interpersonal relationships with students or creating an informal environment through personal dialogue within the first year seminar that allow students to be comfortable. Underlying these comments were the students' and advisors' strong belief in frequency of contact and feedback as key to establishing those relationships.”

(excerpts from Herron, 2008, dissertation)

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Change our mind-set. Characteristics of non-traditional students continue to evolve, so we must frequently revisit our views of non-traditional students. A non-traditional student may be 20 instead of 45; a 20-year-old student may be a parent of two with a full time job.

Reconsider our internal advising structure. Advising non-traditional students can be more time consuming due to great variability within this student population. Use multiple contact methods, including face-to-face, email, phone, and Web advising. Create materials that cater to a variety of learning styles.

Confirm student goals. Effective advisors garner a sense of students' overall histories and why now is the time a particular non-traditional student has chosen to enroll. Provide students with a questionnaire that helps them reveal the goals they hope to achieve. Let their answers establish a road map for helping these students effectively meet their goals.

Help students discover their strengths. Ask questions that will help students realize how their real-world knowledge, skills, and talents will assist them in achieving their academic goals. Provide needed insight (e.g., time commitment for an online course) to help these students better manage their varied responsibilities.

Determine the support needed to help students achieve their goals. Many factors determine an appropriate course load and students' abilities to engage in their educational experience. How familiar are students with the higher education environment and its expectations? Do students understand the academic preparation (e.g., type of degree, time to degree, licensure, or specialized skills) necessary to achieve their career goals? Do students need childcare to attend class? Know available support services, both on campus and within the community, that can help students meet their goals.

Demystify college jargon. Each college has terms and acronyms that new students, especially non-traditional students, may find intimidating. Provide new students with a glossary of terms to help them acclimate to the institution.

Touch base frequently. Keeping up with advisees can be a challenging task, so find ways to make it more pleasurable for both advisor and student. Instead of meeting in the office, why not meet up for lunch at the campus cafeteria or meet for a cup of coffee?

Form a non-traditional student network. Introduce mothers to mothers, fathers to fathers, full-time working students to other working students. This can help non-traditional students feel more at home in the higher education setting.

Sponsor family events. Incorporate children and spouses into activities to help keep non-traditional students engaged. A family cookout at a park can make students feel like an advisor is interested in both their academic and personal lives. Note: some institutions require that a liability form be completed by each participant to lessen institutional liability.

Incorporate technology into advising. Many college students immerse themselves in technology. Texting, chat rooms, Facebook® and Twitter® have moved the use of technology to a different level. Think of ways to incorporate frequently used technologies into interactions with non-traditional students.

Help students understand the cultural norms within the college. Make sure these learners understand their roles in communication, social, and professional contacts with peers, faculty, and staff. Students used to being in charge may need a reminder that academic staff work *with* them, not *for* them.

Feel comfortable with student interactions. Advisors should feel confident about working with students who may possess career competencies and life experiences far more extensive than their own. These students may be comfortable in challenging what they hear; advisors should be professional as they share the reasons certain policies and procedures exist.

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Cheat Sheet for STAMPED/NET/MILLENNIAL Generation (First Years)

They are in need of a great deal of structure and want their academic and personal lives organized by adults who are surrogate campus parents (that's YOU)

Things to Remember...

A "correction" for Boomers...what Boomers were not, they are: Sheltered, team oriented, optimistic, rule followers, diverse
Excessive parental expectation and involvement—be proactive
Referral skills are critical
Prefer prescriptive advisement—used to being spoon fed information
Developmental advising—incorporate curriculum, goals, values, and hear their story—and tell them their responsibilities as advisees
Encourage to take culturally rich courses and to participate in clubs and organizations for difference/diversity
Inform of study abroad opportunities
Consider Instant Messenger hours
Utilize a strengths-based advising approach
Course of study plan—comprehensive (extracurricular activities included as well)
Probationary students... minimum of three meetings per semester ...give something tangible at the end of the experience

Questions to Ask...

What are you good at? What are your strengths and weaknesses?
What concepts or ideas do you want to know more about?
How important to you as a life-long ambition is doing good work?
If you could earn a comfortable living no matter what path you followed, and if money was not an issue, what would you like

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**Cheat Sheet for STAMPED/NET/MILLENNIAL Generation
(Non-Traditional)**

Things to Remember...

Educationally underprepared
Lack fluency in English
Limited financial resources
Evening and weekend-oriented
International students
Transfer (national and global)
Mental health issues
Age

Advisors Must...

- Demonstrate understanding and sensitivity to advising developmental students with disabilities, academically deficient, and international students.
- Think about how these life experiences influence their attitudes toward college.

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Cheat Sheet for Undecided Students

The term "undecided" most often describes students who are "unwilling, unable, or unready to make educational and/or vocational decisions" (Gordon, 1984). Students who have a fear of commitment are often unwilling to declare a major. Those who are unable to make a sound decision often lack information in the following three areas (Gordon, 1984):

Personal Characteristics: The student has yet to assess his/her own goals, interests, and abilities.

Academic Areas: The student is unaware of accessible programs or needs assistance evaluating these programs.

Occupational Areas: The student has yet to explore the job market.

Three Approaches to Advising...

Student centered

Group

Personal

No one perfect approach...

A recent trend in higher education has been the promotion of courses that focus on the first-year college experience. According to Wilgoren (1999), these classes work to build self-esteem and motivate students for academic success. Therefore, why not establish a first-year course specifically for undecided students? Like Horning's research class, this course would provide a place in which students could talk about their problems and form a community with their undecided peers. To make the class more effective, the adviser would be the instructor. A group advising approach such as this has many advantages. Gordon (1984) recognizes the time efficiency of providing information to a small group of individuals. The adviser is able to assist many students in areas of self-assessment, career exploration, curricula knowledge, and decision making.

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Cheat Sheet for Working with Military & Veteran Status Students

Things to Remember...

Mental health concerns
Balancing multiple roles
Non-traditional student status
Adjustment issues

Advisers should talk to their veteran advisees and ask them how they are adjusting to civilian life and to college. Advisers should also try to connect veterans with appropriate groups on campus. For example, one idea is to create a multi-dimensional mentorship/ friendship program. This program could include assigning a current Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) student to each veteran. The veteran can then feel helpful to the ROTC student by explaining what to expect in war, and the ROTC student can be the veteran's friend and listen with a more sympathetic ear about the veteran's past experiences.

Research shows that many veterans who are in college do not adjust well (Paulson & Krippner, 2007). Many of them bring back from combat duty significant mental health problems. When service members return home they are often rendered speechless when it comes to giving a first-person report of their experiences and the emotions that war evoked. In the article *Life in Iraq*, one soldier stated, "I came back knowing I could handle anything, but I was wrong. I had seen so much destruction and so much death. I couldn't relate to the students—all those happy people on campus who had no idea what was happening in Iraq" (Hoskins, 2006, p. 4). In addition, many of them grapple with communicating what they are feeling. "Perhaps there was a repression and suppression of the combat experiences preventing a first-person report" (Paulson & Krippner, 2007, p. 46). This inability to express one's emotions suggests a lack of emotional management on the part of the soldiers who struggle to return home.

"Developing purpose entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interest and options, to clarify goals, to make plans, and to persist despite obstacles" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 50). Therefore, **college advisers working with former service members should draw upon the military member's past experience. Keep the veterans focused on how the skills they acquired in the military are transferable to civilian life.** For example, Jimmy learned through his military job experience that he loved numbers and all aspects that go into statistics. He found that his passion involved working in the intelligence arena. If he had not joined the military, he would not have known that about himself. "We discover our vocation by discovering what we love to do, what energizes and fulfills us, what uses our talents and challenges us to develop new ones, and what actualizes all our potentials for excellence" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 50).

(Ely, <http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/080730me.htm>)

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Things to Remember...

Be proactive in engaging them (e.g., eNewsletter)
Be sympathetic, but not apologetic ...student needs to take responsibility for policies and rules
Stay cool and clearly outline students options
Don't attempt to counsel, interpret, or fix family dynamics ...encourage parent-student communication about grades, etc.
Be available to support and encourage...this may be new and overwhelming for them, too!
FERPA
And...that PARENTS ARE OUR ALLIES

Advice to them...

Maintain regular contact with your student
Offer advice (when appropriate)
Encourage students to do the things they can do for themselves (e.g., register for courses, go to see a tutor)
Allow students to make mistakes in this environment!
Don't be concerned—we are here to support you through this and so are our ample campus partners!

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Be proactive in engaging them (e.g., eNewsletter)
Be sympathetic, but not apologetic ...student needs to take responsibility for policies and rules
Stay cool and clearly outline students options
Don't attempt to counsel, interpret, or fix family dynamics ...encourage parent-student communication about grades, etc.
Be available to support and encourage...this may be new and overwhelming for them, too!
FERPA
And...that PARENTS ARE OUR ALLIES

Advice to them...

Maintain regular contact with your student
Offer advice (when appropriate)
Encourage students to do the things they can do for themselves (e.g., register for courses, go to see a tutor)
Allow students to make mistakes in this environment!
Don't be concerned—we are here to support you through this and so are our ample campus partners!

Cheat Sheet for Working with the Struggling Student

“When advising the academically underprepared student, advisors must build a close student-advisor relationship that, as it develops, encourages student independence as they achieve educational, career, and personal goals through the use of the full range of institutional and community resources.”

(Winston, Miller, Ender & Grites, 1982)

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Intrusive Advising Helps Students Become Resilient...

Experience shows that intrusive advising strategies can be especially useful when advising to build student resiliency. Intrusive advising strategies found to be helpful at the initial enrollment of an underprepared student include:

Utilize appropriate assessment tools (e.g., ACT, ACCULACER, COMPASS, etc.) to determine student skills and abilities;

Employ open-ended questioning techniques e.g., "What subjects did you enjoy studying in the past?" with follow-up questions such as "What methods did you find successful in studying this subject?"

Identify student strengths as well as skill deficits;

Be direct, emphatic, and prescriptive when designing a plan to overcome skills deficits (Ender & Wilkie, 2000);

Recommend courses appropriate to students' current skill levels mixed with course options in areas of previous success;

Match student learning style with the teaching style used in the course; use caution in recommending on-line classes or satellite classes;

Help students determine the time of day that will best optimize learning e.g., determine if the student is a 'morning person';

Help students set short and long-term goals and develop action plans to achieve their goals (Ender & Wilkie, 2000);

Introduce student programs, resources and groups -- TRIO/SSS, Gear Up, writing and math centers, learning and study skills classes, college survival courses, Orientation, career development center, etc. -- that create support structures;

Explain the importance of meeting deadlines and regular class attendance;

If the student is eligible for financial assistance, encourage the student to obtain a work-study position on campus for a limited number of hours per week. Note: Research cited by Wilkie and Jones (1994) indicates campus employment is associated with higher retention.

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Building a Success Plan...

C. Anderson (2004), citing Spann and McCrimmon (1998), suggests that a detailed plan is needed if we are to address student academic needs **"since the underprepared student often has an unrealistic view of the importance of background skills and knowledge and tends to avoid registering in the necessary developmental coursework."** Development of such a plan could pose a significant problem, especially for the underprepared student who is also a Millennial since, as Keeling (2003) notes, **Millennial students often enter our institutions lacking in educational planning skills.**

Academically underprepared students often have no idea how to go about earning a degree: they do not know what steps they must take or the particulars of what institutions expect of them. It is imperative that advisors outline both the institution's expectations of students and what students can expect from advisors throughout their academic careers. **These expectations should be made available in a clear and concise bulleted listing that reads "The Advisor's Role and Responsibilities" as well as another bulleted listing of the "Student's Role and Responsibilities"** (see *Student and Advisor Responsibilities in Advising* http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Links/student_responsibility.htm for examples).

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Academic advisors are a vital part of the institutional effort to build resiliency in students who come to us academically underprepared...

King (2004) suggests that we help underprepared students become resilient when we:

- Assist students in planning a program consistent with their abilities and interests
- Provide choices
- Work in tandem with developmental education program personnel across the institution
- Interpret and provide rationale for instructional policies, procedures, and requirements
- Monitor student progress toward goals
- Teach problem solving techniques
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Cheat Sheet for Working with the Minority Student

As the attention to diversity continues to increase, it becomes important for offices with academic advising responsibilities to begin to examine their practices. Penn State's President Graham Spanier (2004) addressed this issue when he wrote that this new diverse student population "may need more individualized attention or our office hours may need to be changed to match their schedules." He continued by stating that **minority populations may require more from the advising relationship, particularly for those who find themselves on a predominantly white campus. Because of their distinctive position on campus, some of these students may be reluctant to ask for help. This hesitancy can contribute to academic difficulty and cause students to leave college.** Meaningful contact with faculty members and advisers can make the difference.

It is interesting to note that Spanier (2004) reports diversity not only as ethnic makeup but also "other characteristics as well. They may be older, only attend part-time, and are likely to hold a job." **It is easy as an adviser to believe that all Latino students value family over individuality, or that to a Japanese student, the lack of eye contact is a sign of respect, when in reality, the Latino student might have been raised apart from typical Latino culture, and the Japanese student might be a third-generation American who is only avoiding eye contact because he or she is embarrassed about his or her academic performance.**

As minority populations begin to account for more and more of the population growth in the United States (Spanier, 2004), it becomes **imperative that all advising practitioners begin to recognize the shortcomings of the archaic way of viewing diverse students through a lens of stereotyping while still respecting cultural differences.**

First we must **recognize that a great number of diverse students are first-generation college students**, and advisers must function as a support system that "understands the commitment needed to successfully attain a college education. In this essential role, an adviser can help students understand what the family cannot" (Masterson, 2007).

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Cheat Sheet for Working with the International Student

Things to Remember...

Know your resources on campus—academic as well as getting them connected with peers!

Maintain a strong working relationship with cultural centers as well as with the International Programs office

Transition issues...

- Lifestyle
- Cultural awareness
- Language barriers
- Educational system differences

Appreciative Advising is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potential (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008). There are six phases of Appreciative Advising: Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don't Settle (Bloom et al.).

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Cheat Sheet for Working with the Honors Student

Questions to Ask...“Appreciative Advising”

Discover

What do you consider your greatest accomplishment? Why?

Tell me about an activity that you performed in the last week that left you feeling energized and motivated.

Tell me a story about when you felt at your best.

Dream

If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? What do you want to be now?

What is your ideal type of work environment?

Design

What could you do this week to help you reach one of your goals?

What activities do you think your future employer would consider valuable?

During the **Deliver** phase, students follow through on the plans that they made during the Design phase. During this phase, it is important that advisers support and encourage students (Bloom et al., 2008). In addition to managing the rigorous course work associated with honors programs, honors students typically demonstrate greater involvement in extracurricular activities (Ender & Wilkie, 2000) and pursue a broader range of activities (Kerr & Colangelo, 1988).

The last phase of Appreciative Advising is **Don't Settle**. The key to this phase is to both support and challenge students to continually raise their internal bar of expectations. Honors students are among the brightest and best students on campus. The issue with some honors students is that they set their own internal bar too high. Honors students tend to be perfectionists and the “stress and anxiety associated with high expectations should be monitored” (Ender & Wilkie, 2000, p. 123). Therefore, **academic advisers have a responsibility to “teach students how to cope with these expectations, encouraging them to reach out for assistance if the stress levels become overbearing”** (Ender & Wilkie, p. 123). These are the students who become doctors, engineers, and university professors, but they still need to be challenged and encouraged to reach their goals.

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Cheat Sheet for Working with First Generation Students

First-generation college students are a unique population. While they often experience challenges during their educational careers, they are also a resilient and successful group. **Academic advisers have a great amount of influence on these students.** Advisers should carefully consider what format and style of advising they will implement to help these students become college graduates.

Rodriguez (2003) refers to the first factor as *special status*. Students in her study were typically singled out, in a positive way, during childhood. This special treatment **gave students the self-confidence to take risks**. Risk-taking led the students to experience things that were not typical of other family members and positively impacted their decisions to move away from home and begin college. Rodriguez identified *positive naming* as a second factor that contributed to student success. **Positive naming involves someone in the student's life who recognizes his or her potential, connects the student's natural strengths and characteristics to a profession, and helps the student learn how to enter that particular field.** The third factor that Rodriguez identified involves **encouragement, assistance, and advocacy of mentors in the student's life.**

While Rodriguez's article mainly focused on what factors were pivotal in helping students enroll in college, she also identified factors that can **assist students after enrollment: inspirational teaching, promoting a sense of belonging, activism and risk taking, and aiding students in creating academic plans.** Academic advisers can play pivotal roles in the lives of first-generation students once they arrive on campus by mentoring and encouraging them. **"For the support needed to succeed in college, many first-generation college students turn to their academic advisers, not just for academic advice, but for guidance considered necessary to navigate day-to-day campus life"** (Sickles, 2004). Effective advisers will go beyond assisting students to select classes; they will help students to plan both academic and personal goals for success (Sickles).

Group or individual advising...or both? Any and all approaches work well with this demographic!

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Challenges & Solutions 1: Enabling vs. Advising

Issues:

- You have to know when you are giving out too much information
- Develop listening skills
- Appointment issues
- Remember FERPA

Solutions:

- Be specific, concise and clear in illustrating how to perform the tasks (e.g., screen shots of how to access registration, etc.)
- Give clear directions of name, location, etc. of resources on campus
- Set boundaries for yourself (e.g., do not work through lunch or wait for students who don't show up on time—have re-schedule)
- Remember confidentiality rules
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- Set boundaries for yourself (e.g., do not work through lunch or wait for students who don't show up on time—have re-schedule)
- Remember confidentiality rules
- Create an advising syllabus and contract that you have students read/sign/bring with them to their appointment

Challenges & Solutions 2: (You are) Overwhelmed

Issues:

- Learning a ton of information and campus resources
- Must know database systems
- Must know highlights of new programs, requirement changes, etc.
- Need effective way to communicate changes in timely manner

Solutions:

- Create your own training manual
- Seek the correct answer
- Develop a list server of colleagues and seek information
- Seek out a mentor!
- Block out "catch up" time to review new policies, etc. (e.g., Fridays at 3pm)

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Challenges & Solutions 3: Communication

Issues:

- The impact of technology and easy access to information
- Advising disgruntled students
- Students demand instant responses
- Be aware of cultural issues in communication
- Establish academic and career goals with students

Solutions:

- Empathize with the student, regardless of your feelings for their situation
- Explain to the student their options
- Be aware of university procedures if student chooses to take action (e.g., appealing a grade)
- Remain calm if student becomes angry or belligerent

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Silent
Boom
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Remember: generations are cyclical and type repetitive! So, they WILL be back and the traits will possibly be even MORE developed! :)

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Time Savers...

- Create and share email templates to save time and ensure speedy responses (e.g., policies and FAQs that you can pre-empt and keep saved/re-format for later use)...don't reinvent the wheel!
- Put time into your calendars for follow-ups (e.g., 8am and 4pm)
- MAP-Works...work smarter not harder! It's a tool, not a time drain...insert time to update in your calendar (depending on how your respective department/college requires you to use it)
- Parent Newsletters...be proactive in your approach.
- Be careful of expectations you create with your advisees—if you immediately respond, they will expect it from you...and everyone else in the world...the same goes with walk-in/drop-ins and late appointments.
- Remember that not ALL students have equal access to technology, or may work full-time and cannot access their email as readily. Be mindful of this and consider asking what the best means to communicate with them is and noting it in their file.
- You must train them early and often regarding how to sift through what you send and use the resources you're referring them to!
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What about ME?

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Quick Check

NOTE: Insert 30 minutes into your schedule once a month to complete...yes, even in October and March.

- Why am I here?
- How can I continue to approach my work with fresh eyes/new ideas?
- Am I giving all I can during the work day to our students? If not, in what areas can I do better?
- How can I stay balanced during the peak advising times?
- In what ways am I excelling in my role?
- What areas of opportunity do I have in my current position?
- What am I doing to be a lifelong learner or advance my knowledge of advising?
- In what ways am I contributing to my departmental, college, and university?
- What do I need from my supervisor(s) and peer(s)? If I haven't asked for it—when and how will I?
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