Academic Advising Handbook

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SECTION TWO

ACADEMIC ADVISING
RESEARCH DATA
Academic advising is an essential element in the success and persistence of postsecondary students (Klepfer & Hull, 2012). Although an institution’s culture, values, and practices affect the organization and delivery of advising (Habley, 1997), practitioners directly influence personal, institutional, and societal success. Specifically, they help students “become members of their higher education community, think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community” (National Academic Advising Association [NACADA], 2006, para. 7); that is, regardless of the delivery mechanism, through academic advising, students learn to make the most of their college experience (Miller, para. 1). As higher education curricula grow increasingly complex and constituents demand accountability, stakeholders feel the pressure to make students’ academic experience as meaningful as possible. Academic advising professionals must be ready to meet these challenges.

The growth of academic advising mirrors the growth and changes in higher education (Cook, 2009; Thelin & Hirschy, 2009). In the 1870s, electives introduced in the academic curriculum meant advisors needed “to guide students in the successful pursuit of their chosen paths” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 5). The 1970s ushered in a new era for academic advising with O’Banion’s (1972/1994/2009) and Crookston’s (1972/1994/2009) articles advocating a developmental academic-advising approach. Today, the advising community recognizes more than a dozen relational styles of academic advising (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013). Each approach encourages professional, faculty, and peer advisors to help students delineate their academic, career, and life goals as they help students craft the educational plans necessary to complete their postsecondary objectives. These approaches are often customized to meet the diverse needs of today’s college student (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013).

In 1977, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was formed to provide direction and purpose for practicing academic advisors (Grites & Gordon, 2009). Today, NACADA flourishes with more than 12,000 members in over 30 countries. The NACADA Statement of Core Values (NACADA, 2005) offers the ethical principles that guide advising practice. Along with the NACADA Concept of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2006) and the CAS Standards, the Core Values serve as a framework all academic advisors can use to examine their professional practice. Information on the NACADA resources, programs, and services can be found at www.nacada.ksu.edu.

As those in higher education, including academic advisors, respond to a changing postsecondary environment, they must structure exemplary practices, pay particular attention
to key institutional learning outcomes, serve the distinctive needs of a range of student populations, and promote national agendas on degree completion (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013). The strong emphasis on research in academic advising reflects today's focus on student retention and graduation. Klepfer and Hull (2012) noted “the strength of academic advising as a factor in persistence. College students who reported visiting with advisors frequently had a much greater likelihood of persisting than their peers who never did” (para. 17). As a result, assessment and research increasingly influence the practices and processes of the field.

Today, advisors utilize many theories and strategies from the social sciences, humanities, and education to inform practice. When applying these paradigms, they foster productive relationships with students in support of their higher education goals. In fact, academic advisors provide “perhaps the only opportunity for all students to develop a personal, consistent relationship with someone in the institution who cares about them” (Drake, 2011, p. 10). Their adherence to CAS Standards advances the common goals of academic advising.

Lowenstein (2006) observed that “an excellent advisor does for students’ entire education what the excellent teacher does for a course: helps them order the pieces, put them together to make a coherent whole, so that the student experiences the curriculum not as a checklist of discrete, isolated pieces but instead as a unity, a composition of interrelated parts with multiple connections and relationships” (para. 5). Academic advisors meet these obligations through applying frameworks for good practice, including building partnerships with pivotal campus offices such as orientation, first-year student programs, and career services.

As the NACADA Concept of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2006) delineates, academic advising objectives differ among institutions based upon the particular mission, goals, curriculum, co-curriculum, and assessment methods established for the respective campus (White, 2000). However, a representative sample of learning outcomes for advising indicates that students will:

- craft a coherent educational plan based on assessment of abilities, aspirations, interests, and values;
- use complex information from various sources to set goals, reach decisions, and achieve those goals;
- assume responsibility for meeting academic program requirements;
- articulate the meaning of higher education and the intent of the institution’s curriculum;
- cultivate the intellectual habits that lead to a lifetime of learning; and
- behave as citizens who engage in the wider world around them (NACADA, 2006, para. 10).

The increasing public attention placed on college completion means increased visibility for academic advising. Reports such as Guided Pathways to Success (Complete College America, 2013) point to academic advising as vital to degree completion. As institutions seek to increase and diversify enrollments, academic advisors are vital to ensuring appropriate matriculation and transfer leading to degree completion for all students. The evolving manner by which students complete college degrees, including the blending of courses offered on a variety of campuses and online, places new challenges on academic advisors, who must possess the tools needed to meet the demands of students in virtual space and across multiple institutions (Compete College America, 2013).

A crucial component of the college experience, academic advising encourages students to cultivate meaning in their lives, make significant decisions about their futures, and access institutional resources. When practiced with competence and dedication, academic advising is integral to student success, persistence, retention, and completion. Therefore, academic
advisors must develop the tools and skills necessary to address the many issues that influence student success and do so with respect to the increasing diversity on college and university campuses. The standards and guidelines in the Academic Advising Program Standards provide a framework for developing strong academic advising programs.
References, Readings, and Resources


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"One of the main responsibilities of any institution of higher education involves academic advisement of students."
(Ward, 1979, p. 1).

# Introduction

In most institutions of higher education, faculty members are required to assume the role of academic advisor (Dressel, 1974, p. 57). Until recently, faculty advising had received relatively little or no attention in the literature or on individual campuses even though systems of academic advising involve hundreds of thousands of students, faculty, and paraprofessionals (Raskin, 1979, p. 99). In addition, multiplied millions of dollars in both faculty time and physical facilities are required to support and conduct the activity known as academic advising (Bonar, 1976a, p. 190). Greater interest in advising has developed because of the growing complexity of higher education institutions, because of the ever increasing threat of declining enrollment, and because of the diversity of the students enrolling in the universities. Once viewed as a set of scheduling procedures, academic advising programs have been established to assist students in the development of their human potential (Abel, 1980, p. 151).

# Assumptions

Universal practice in higher education has students assigned to faculty members in the disciplines in which the students are majoring. Too frequently, however, faculty advisors must work with students who are undecided about a major. The general assumption is that faculty advisors will be able to guide their advisees toward each advisee's collegiate goal--to be graduated within the normal span of four or five academic years (Dressel, 1974, p. 57).

Academic advising systems utilizing the university faculty are based on several assumptions:

1. Faculty members are interested in one-to-one situations with students.
2. Faculty members are the most appropriate persons to guide students in course selections.
3. Faculty members are knowledgeable enough to help students through a maze of degree requirements.
4. Utilizing faculty members is the most financially feasible way of providing academic advising.
5. Students want advice from faculty members concerning each student's specific academic program (Dressel, 1974, p. 57).

# Definitions

It is obvious from perusing the five basic assumptions previously stated that faculty members in the role of academic advisors are essential components for any successful academic advisement program. Perhaps at this point the question should be asked, "What is a faculty advisor?" The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers has stated that an advisor is "A member of the college staff (usually a member of the instructional faculty)"
assigned to assist a student with academic planning" (Definitions of Terms for Admissions and Records, 1980, p. 8).

Labeling the faculty advisor the "University Adviser," the Committee on Advising and Counseling at Stanford University asserts that:

The University Adviser is the student's principal faculty adviser. His prime concern with the student, and the student's with him, is the identification of the student's aims and plans, his interest and abilities, and the planning of a coherent education that builds upon the student's interest and allows him perspective on and awareness of both his limitations and his strengths. The adviser does not plan for the student but helps the student to plan for himself (Study of Education at Stanford, 1969, p. 19).

The Stanford Committee defines the advisor as "...the student's academic advocate, the particular educator who agrees to concern himself with his advisee's best education." In the Committee's view, "The Adviser is not to be interested merely in obedience to regulations but is to pursue with the student the education that best serves and develops that student" (Study of Education at Stanford, 1969, p. 27).

Every student, regardless of the type and size of higher education institution, has occasion to be seen in a counseling relationship by a faculty member, known as the faculty advisor, specifically qualified to assist in decisions concerning academic majors and courses of study. The faculty advisor needs to be aware of the general programs of the institution and, more specifically, the courses within his academic division (Shaffer and Martinson, 1966, p. 46). However, The Advisor's Handbook of San Jose State University emphasizes that "an academic advisor does more than offer advice on academic program planning." It continues that "an academic advisor is that representative of an academic department or program to whom a student can turn for the personal assistance that often accompanies the central activity of the university--instruction" (1980, p. 2).

The definition for faculty advisor at Stephens College indicates that:

...every faculty member and professional administrator...assume counseling responsibilities for a group of eight to twelve students. Each adviser is expected to deal with academic, career, and emotional problems, and he has training to qualify him to do so (Mayhew and Ford, 1973, p. 51).

Crocket (1978a) contends that the faculty advisor serves as a coordinator of the advisee's educational experience. The advisor needs the ability to help students define and develop realistic goals, to perceive their needs accurately, and to match these needs with appropriate institutional resources. A caring and trusting relationship is essential.

It has been stated that the faculty advisor is more than an information and traffic-control officer. The advisor "conveys to the student a philosophy of contemporary education, a rational base for the consideration of problems, and suggests plans of action on which he may move" (Hardee and
Mayhew, 1970, p. 21). The faculty advisor is a faculty member who gives advice to the student, usually on matters directly concerned with course work and academic programs (Bornheimer, et al. 1973, p. 53).

The Faculty Advisor’s Role
The faculty advisor is generally a member of the university faculty who has been assigned to the role or who has responded favorably to an invitation to serve as an advisor (Bloland, 1967, p. 8). The role of the faculty advisor has been described by Hardee and Mayhew in the following ways:

1. The adviser will assist the student in effecting a program of study consonant with the latter's interests and competencies.
2. The adviser will assist the student in periodic evaluation of his academic progress.
3. The adviser will assist the student in initial exploration of long range occupational and professional plans, referring him to sources for specialized assistance.
4. The adviser will serve as coordinator of the learning experiences of the student, assisting in the integration of the various kinds of assistance rendered--health and psychological aids, remedial work, financial aids, religious counseling--the panoply of all services available to the students (1970, p. 11).

To facilitate the foregoing role descriptions, the advisor should have considerable knowledge of the institution's combined educational offerings, including the total available classes, extra classes, special topics classes, independent study classes, laboratories, clinics, and field experiences. It is essential for the faculty advisor to have a comprehensive knowledge of the curriculum. In addition, the advisor should be familiar with the college campus in its many structural parts; should recognize the prevailing learning climate on campus; and should have acquired, or be in the process of acquiring, adequate skills for communicating with various students in authentic, appropriate, and meaningful ways (Hardee and Mayhew, 1970, p. 11).

Agreeing with Hardee and Mayhew, Higbee (1979) asserts that the role of academic advisor has many facets. Advisors must be knowledgeable and up-to-date on matters concerning (1) curriculum--requirements in the student's majors, as well as general education and graduation requirements of the university; (2) registration procedures; (3) student personnel services--medical, counseling, housing, placement, social, recreational, etc.; (4) financial obligations; and (5) job market and employment information. Higbee (1979) also contends that faculty advisors must know the mechanics of adding and dropping classes; changing majors; transferring from one university, college, or department to another; evaluating transfer credit or courses; petitioning for grade changes; interpreting grade point average computations; and keeping accurate records of each student's progress.

The advisor's role as described in The Advisor's Handbook of San Jose State University includes being the student's academic navigator. Since the advisor is the advisee's primary link to the academic programs of the university, the advisor should be "...the person to whom the student should want to turn for serious, considered advice on academic questions." The advisor and advisee are in actuality "co-navigators" because many basic decisions about an academic program must be made by the student, utilizing input from the advisor. The role as academic navigator involves offering suggestions, questions, criticisms, praise, direction, and any other comments which will help each advisee define and achieve educational goals (1980, p. 2).
In addition, it often happens that advisees and advisors become so closely acquainted that the advisor knows advisees intellectually, emotionally, and sometimes socially as well. These are products of a productive, equally shared advisor-advisee relationship. Of course, it is not the advisor's duty to act as pal or psychological confidant, but at times the advisee may come to the advisor seeking other kinds of counsel besides the purely academic. The alert advisor should anticipate such "probes" and be prepared to respond to them because the student's academic life can flourish only if it is relatively healthy in other ways, as well as academic (The Advisor's Handbook, San Jose State University, 1980, p. 2).

Another role of the faculty advisor is being the student's advocate. Higbee (1979) refers to this role as "A large order!" because the advisor is "...expected to show a sincere interest in the student, become aware of the student's interests and abilities, and be the student's advocate within the department and the university" (1979, pp. 47-48).

Hardee (1961) has written that the role of faculty advising is a tri-dimensional activity, consisting of: (1) discerning the purposes of the institution; (2) perceiving the purposes of the student learner; and (3) postulating the possibilities for the student as a learner and promoting these as means are available.

The first dimension, discerning the purposes of the university, requires a knowledge of institutional aims. Within these aims, the goals of general and professional education must be understood. Part of the knowledge to be acquired by advisors is how the content of the individual courses and the method for their teaching produce overall learning. The advisors' search for the learning climate in their respective institutions involves the image the university has for prospective and present students--the texture of the campus, its feeling, and its spirit.

The second dimension, understanding the purposes of the student, is closely related to the first dimension when one considers the fact that students of a given nature generally gravitate toward the institution which will fit their needs, their abilities, and their family and cultural influences.

The third dimension, postulating the possibilities for the student as a learner and promoting these, requires cooperation with and from the student. Hardee (1961) states that "It is the ultimate in the advising role." The perceptive advisor facilitates the student's growth in wisdom, in the appreciation for and exercise of knowledge, and in the overall integration of learning (1961, p. 116). Advisors need to weigh their reactions and approaches to each individual advisee with one major purpose in mind: to enrich and enhance the advisee's academic pursuits and development. This can be accomplished "...by knowing the student's propensities and responding to them with opinions and help--always when asked, often when not asked" (The Advisor's Handbook, San Jose State University, 1980, p. 2).

Kramer and Gardner (1983) indicate that academic advising is a continuing process with sporadic contact between two individual parties. The role of the faculty advisor and the process of advising may be described by an analogy: the student advisee is climbing a ladder called higher education, maturation, or achievement. There are various points on the ladder called landings--places to rest, to review progress, and to plan for subsequent efforts. The landings are probably located at different places on the ladder according to each student climber's needs,
wants, and desires. Simply stated, the advisor's role and responsibility is to be available at each of the landings to help the climber review and learn from past efforts and to plan for what lies ahead (1983, p. 24).

**Functions of the Faculty Advisor**

Faculty advisors are selected to provide educational counseling for college students. To be effective, the advisor must recognize that each student has different abilities, interests, aspirations, needs, experiences, and problems. Academic advising cannot, therefore, be a mechanical, routine matter. The faculty advisor's primary responsibility is to help individual advisees plan the program of study that will satisfy university requirements and at the same time meet each student's specific needs. To accomplish this goal, the faculty advisor must urge the student to give ample thought to the matter of education; he must direct the student in examining all significant facets of education while making necessary decisions (Brown, 1972, p. 93).

Although the functions of the faculty advisor vary for different students, the general advising duties are normally as follows:

1. The faculty advisor explains to the student the program of general or basic education as it relates to the first two years of college, to the major of the student, and to preparation for life pursuits generally.
2. The faculty advisor helps the student examine the course offerings in his major, relate these to other possible majors, and understand the graduation requirements for the curriculum leading to an appropriate degree.
3. The faculty advisor helps the student explore the career fields for which his major provides training and obtain related vocational information and survey job opportunities.
4. The faculty advisor serves as a link between the student and the administration by counseling the student on his scholastic problems (course scheduling, course adjustment, and academic progress and by making appropriate referral to other assistance agencies).
5. The faculty advisor serves as a "faculty friend" to the student by demonstrating a personal interest in him and in his adjustment to college; by serving as a central contact person in obtaining information that can be used to help the student; and by allowing the student freedom to make his own choices after the limitations, alternatives, and consequences involved in a decision are pointed out (Brown, 1972, pp. 93-94).

The faculty advisors assigned to advise students who are undecided about a major or majors have somewhat different responsibilities. Instead of helping each student explore the selected major, the advisor assists the student's investigation of potential majors by (1) referring the student to the counseling center for possible vocational testing and guidance and by (2) referring the student to special activities wherein interests may be explored and experiences gained. Once an undecided student has elected a major, it may be necessary to transfer him to a faculty advisor in his newly found major department (Brown, 1972, p. 94).
Hardee (1955) indicates that in helping the student emerge as a better integrated person, the faculty advisor engages in the following six types of activities:

1. The faculty adviser explains to the student the program of general or basic education as it relates to the first two years of college, to the major of the student (if he has expressed interest in a major), and to preparation for life pursuits generally.

2. The faculty adviser plans with the student a schedule of courses with a consideration of the over-all year's work. This may be accomplished through a consideration of the offerings set forth in the various publications of the institution, by considering the student's strengths and needs as revealed by a study of high school tests and grades and of college entrance tests, by personal interview, and by judgments as to his ability contributed by high school principals and teachers.

3. The faculty adviser assists the student in exploring his major field. To accomplish this, he will interpret the various departmental publications of the university; in addition, he may refer the student to a special consultant in the field or to the counselors in the vocational guidance office. Finally, he may recommend particular extra class or part-time work activities for the student.

4. Likewise, the faculty adviser assists the "undecided" student in exploring a major field. This is accomplished by referring him to experts in several fields of specialty, to counselors in the vocational guidance office, to the bureau of testing for supplementary testing, and to various extra class activities wherein interests may be explored and experiences gained.

5. The faculty adviser serves as a "faculty friend" to the student by demonstrating a personal interest in him and in his adjustment to college; by serving as a central contact person in obtaining suggestions, which can be used to help the student, from residence counselor, teacher, or department head; in giving suggestions concerning the student to the residence counselor, teacher, or department head; and by allowing the student freedom to make his own choices after the limitations, alternatives, and consequences involved in a decision are pointed out.

6. The faculty adviser serves as a link between the student and the administration by counseling the student on matters of failure, on the procedures for dropping and adding courses, on eligibility for the various exemption examinations in general education, and on admittance to special remedial classes or clinics (1959, pp. 52-53).

Bloland (1967) indicates that the functions of the faculty advisor are group related. He classified the functions into three areas: (1) maintenance or custodial; (2) group growth; and (3) program content. Maintenance functions include those which help perpetuate the organization, follow rules and procedures, and provide a link with the group's history and traditions. The group growth functions are essentially facilitating. They refer to the advisor's contributions which help improve the operation and effectiveness of the group. The group growth functions include: directing consideration toward and assisting with development of group participation skills; organizational structure and procedures; leadership training; effective planning; evaluation; and related topics which apply to groups regardless of their specific objectives (1967, p. 12).

The faculty advisor makes his unique contribution as educator on a university campus in the area of the third function--program content. Specific contributions which the faculty advisor can
make in this area are offering program suggestions, recruiting colleagues to provide information and perspectives on issues, helping the members apply their classroom learning to out-of-class situations, and, in general, influencing the program and activities of the group so that they are compatible with objectives and endeavors of the university (Shaffer and Martinson, 1966, p. 79).

Translating the functions and activities of faculty advisors into performance objectives, Hardee and Mayhew (1970) wrote that:

1. The faculty adviser discusses the program of general or liberal education as it relates to the first two years of college, to the declared major of the student, and to preparation for life pursuits both during and after college.
2. The faculty adviser plans with the student a schedule of courses, with consideration of the immediate goals as well as of the long range objectives as those objectives can be determined.
3. The faculty adviser assists the student in exploring his major field by interpreting printed information, by referral to other advisory personnel, in recommending extra class activities or part-time work experiences to clarify roles.
4. The faculty adviser serves as coordinator of the educational experiences of the student, working in company with residence counselor, day-student adviser, teachers, department head, or others who observe or interact with the student.
5. The faculty adviser serves as faculty friend, demonstrating a personal interest in the student and discussing with him the minor to major concerns of his educational pursuit. In this role, the adviser provides the student freedom to make his own choices after the limitations, alternatives, and consequences involved in the decision are pointed out (1970, p. 21).

Limitations of Faculty Advising/Advisors

Hardee (1959) and Brown (1972) indicate that faculty advisors cannot be all things to all advisees because of the vast differences among students. Faculty advisors must recognize their limitations as counselors. Some of the restrictions impeding the effectiveness of faculty advisors are:

1. A faculty advisor cannot make decisions for an advisee but he can be a sympathetic listener and even offer various possible solutions to the student's problem.
2. A faculty advisor cannot increase the native ability of an advisee, but he can encourage the maximum use of the ability that the student has.
3. A faculty advisor cannot reduce the academic or employment load of a floundering advisee, but he can make recommendations that such adjustments be made.
4. A faculty advisor should not criticize a fellow faculty member to a student, but he can make a friendly approach to any teacher if that teacher is involved in the student's problem.
5. A faculty advisor should not tell an advisee his raw scores on psychological tests, but he can indicate areas in which the student seems weak or strong by discussing centiles derived from local norms.
6. A faculty advisor should not betray a student's confidence on matters of a personal nature, but he can seek appropriate professional assistance in helping a student with minor personal or social adjustment problems (Brown, 1972, pp. 94-95).
7. A faculty advisor should not attempt to handle cases of emotional disturbances which fall outside the behavioral pattern of students adjudged reasonably normal. When complex problems arise concerning financial aid, mental or physical health, or personal-social counseling, faculty should refer students to professional personnel through the Dean of Students Office (The American College Testing Program, 1979a, p. 4.149).

Even though they must recognize their limitations as counselors, faculty members, Eble (1976) warns, may have to add a basic competence in counseling and advising to their professional skills. Such competence may be gained in much the same way as other skills: by learning through study or instruction or practice. Little skill is gained unless faculty members accept the responsibility, give attention to its details, and intelligently engage in doing it (1976, p. 74).

According to Hoffmann (1965), there are two additional factors that hamper the effectiveness of academic advising. Those two limitations are:

1. Competition for the budget dollar by services that are obviously more essential than academic advising, e.g., excellent teaching and outstanding faculty members as well as the apparently endless need for the expansion and maintenance of physical facilities.
2. Faculty reluctance to become engrossed in anything other than teaching and research which pay dividends in money and status (1965, p. 16).

These two factors will make it difficult for universities to cope adequately with the expected rise in emotional and psychological instabilities of students. Colleges and college faculty members must strive to increase, augment, develop, and improve academic advising effectiveness. If they do less, they will be failing in their obligation not only to their students but to themselves (Hoffman, 1965, pp. 16-18).

**Conclusion/Student Benefits**

One of the major emphases at this university has been person-to-person education. The University has advertised and is committed to the concept that the student is of utmost importance on the university campus. This concept magnifies the significance of the faculty advisor's role and functions.

When the faculty member accepts the challenge and assumes the responsibility of being an advisor and when other university professional personnel support the faculty member in the advising role, a number of positive student benefits occur. Some of these benefits include the following:

1. The student will know at least one member of the faculty in an other-than-classroom acquaintanceship.
2. The student will have an opportunity to discuss with a faculty member one area of occupational or professional specialty.
3. The student will have a "lifeline" to the administration through his advisor, a member of the academic community. (In the current era of dissent and press for administrative
change, the faculty member can become a strong ally, a trustworthy advisor and evaluator of political action, a teacher of the art and science of campus communication.)

4. The student will have a role model close at hand. The accessibility of an adult who is sought and admired is a powerful stabilizing force in the life of the student learner (Hardee and Mayhew, 1970, pp. 11-12).
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