

In Theory, Advising Matters

Kim Roufs

With full appointment books, advisors rarely have time to think about theory, much less practice it. Crookston and O'Banion, marginality and mattering, 7 vectors of development, student subcultures, and observations on advising styles do not seem to have much to do with students when the line outside the office is getting longer. However, advisors who understand theory can challenge themselves and tailor their own styles to meet the needs of their advisees.

Does theory matter? Does understanding student subcultures help advisors? Does advising style make a difference? Does being familiar with theory make for a better advisor? The answers are yes, yes, yes, and yes.

Academic advising without some understanding of theory easily becomes prescriptive. Although theory gives no guarantee that the advisor will know how to respond properly to an advisee, knowledge of theory provides:

- the framework for advisors to guide their practices and to construct appropriate responses to advisees;
- a means of assessing where students are developmentally, enabling advisors to guide advisees in their growth; and
- the context for a broader understanding of advisees as developing adults.

Theory builds the bridge between simply telling a student the classes to take and guiding a student toward decisions that have lifelong effects.

Understanding the historical context for the theories behind current perspectives on developmental advising helps advisors place advising in a larger framework. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, enrollments were falling, students were asking for direction, and higher education administrators began to take notice of the power of good academic advising. In 1970, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1972) recognized that institutions of higher

education should integrate advising into the academic experience. Thus began the development of academic advising as it is known today.

Developmental Advising per Crookston and O'Banion

In the early 1970s, two influential scholars expanded the definition of advising. Crookston created a broad definition of advising: "Developmental counseling or advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" (Crookston, 1972, p.12).

Not quite so daunting was the model of O'Banion (1972), who defined advising as a top-down regression:

- exploration of life goals,
- vocational goals,
- program choice,
- course choice, and
- class schedule.

In this model, the advising process begins with the larger questions about life goals and values. As the advisee identifies important goals and values, he or she is free to concentrate on vocational and career goals as a means to achieve life goals. As the advisee clarifies the career goals, her or his focus continues to narrow, moving toward the major, the courses, and finally, the scheduling of classes. A common symbol for O'Banion's model is the funnel, with life goals at the top and the scheduling the courses at the narrow end. O'Banion's model sets the stage for further development of advising theory.

Schlossberg's Theory of Mattering

In 1989, Schlossberg developed a theory with which advisors should be familiar: the theory of

After they are the "long ones" who are individual

marginality and mattering. By applying Schlossberg's theory to advisees, the advisor recognizes the discomfort some students experience about their place within the institution; students become marginalized if they do not connect with an individual or a group. When students believe that they matter, confidence replaces feelings of marginality. As simple and straightforward as this theory is, Schlossberg's research shows that mattering matters. For a successful academic experience, students must feel they matter to someone or some group. When students believe they do not matter, disengagement begins. Schlossberg's work supports that of other theorists who state that disengagement leads to student departure from the institution. Therefore, for advisors, advisees must matter.

how do we distinguish

An advisor can easily apply Schlossberg's theory by practicing good relational skills. The advisor should focus on the advisee, welcome and listen to the advisee, be patient, be comfortable with silence, and be relaxed. As the relationship develops, the advisor lets the advisee know that ideas matter, questions matter, initiatives matter, and the advisor's relationship with the advisee matters. The advisor needs simply to remember that each student matters.

Chickering's Seven Vectors

In 1993, Chickering revised his 1969 theory of identity development in college students. Advisors who are knowledgeable about student development frequently apply Chickering's theories to discussions of growth in college students. His model, co-developed with Reisser, contains seven dimensions of student development, which they called vectors:

1. developing intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence;
2. managing emotions;
3. developing emotional autonomy, recognizing interdependence;
4. developing healthy interpersonal relationships;
5. establishing identity;
6. developing purpose; and
7. developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, 45-71).

what Q's can you ask to identify where they are?

At first glance, Chickering and Reisser's theory of development appears to be much more complicated than Schlossberg's theory of mattering. As an advisor becomes acquainted with the vectors, however, he or she can visualize each vector as a continuum along which a student's development progresses.

Advisees are in the process of developing their intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competencies, learning how to manage their emotions, developing emotional maturity and healthy relationships, which are all prerequisites for successfully establishing identity, purpose, and integrity. The academic advisor's role is to foster forward movement on the relevant continua.

How does Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory play out in an advisor-advisee relationship? Consider Jack, a freshman with an attitude, who does not understand why he needs to consult with his advisor before he can register. His thoughts, "This is a waste of time. I already know what classes I have to take," come through loudly and clearly in his body language. Moreover, Jack might be right; he might know exactly which classes to take next semester.

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory, built on Chickering's previous research, gets to the root of why an advisor is more than someone who simply picks classes. An advisor versed in the vectors recognizes that Jack may be struggling at multiple levels; his attitude suggests he may be dealing with issues other than those regarding classes.

what sorts of leading Q's might you ask under student

By asking a leading question, the advisor can scope where Jack is on the first vector, developing competencies. A good question might be, "How was your last exam?" Jack's response, "The study questions did not have anything to do with the test questions, so I blew the test," is a clue to the advisor that Jack needs to develop some intellectual competence. Jack apparently is unable to see a connection between specific questions and generalized answers.

Reinforcing the first vector, developing competencies, the advisor could ask, "Why do you think the study questions did not set you up for a successful exam? Did other students in the class have the same problem?" Jack's subsequent communication with his professor and classmates helps him grow intellectually and interpersonally.

The advisor might also notice that Jack's development in the third vector, developing emotional autonomy and recognizing interdependence in relationships, is limited. Jack has probably not developed a relationship with the professor teaching the class. The simple question, "Have you talked with your professor?" might encourage Jack to disengage from parental and peer influence and set out to be the master of his own destiny by accepting responsibility for his performance and establishing a relationship with the professor.

Another appropriate developmentally oriented response from the advisor is "OK, let's not talk about the classes since you appear to be set in that area."

Let's talk about other aspects of your experience here." Some questions might be, "Where at this institution do you find answers when you need them?" "Do you know any other faculty personally?" or "Are you involved in any activities?" The answers to the questions will tell the advisor, who is considering the responses in light of vectors 3 and 4, whether Jack is developing any connections or meaningful relationships on campus.

The advisor might also recognize that Jack needs coaching in the second vector. Jack's haughtiness and demeanor suggest to the advisor that he has not learned how to manage his emotions. This is an opportunity for the advisor to give permission to Jack to discuss his weaknesses, his fears, and to let Jack know that he matters. Something as basic as "Is there anything I can say that will make you smile?" or if the advisor is comfortable, "Jack, I suspect under that attitude there is a really nice young man. Am I right?" should encourage Jack to share some of his thoughts. In any case, the advisor should guide Jack toward learning to manage his emotions, beginning with the advisor-advisee relationship.

Development in the first four vectors is a prerequisite for development in the fifth vector, establishing identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). As the advisor asks about values, peer groups, talents, interests, and friends, over time Jack's identity develops from being an emotionally needy high-school hot shot to an independent, committed, college student. Confident in who he is and who he is becoming, Jack has laid the groundwork for development in the fifth, sixth, and seventh vectors. After a few semesters, Jack is secure enough to have a solid sense of identity and to appreciate intellectual and cultural diversity. His relationships are more stable, and he has a moral code by which he lives. He consults with his professors on a regular basis and is involved in student government. Jack has come a long way from the student with an attitude who walked into his advisor's office several semesters earlier.

Questions on the advisor's mind such as "How committed are you to the courses you are taking?" or "How will these courses help you beyond college?" and "How do you want to live your life?" will encourage Jack to think about his life goals and the values that are important to him. These questions will guide him in his development of the sixth and seventh vectors, purpose and integrity.

By engaging in a more holistic conversation, the advisor is letting Jack know that success in college is not just about completing degree requirements. Understanding and helping a student move through the vectors helps produce a responsibly engaged citizen, one whose relationships and identities go beyond self to the workforce and the community.

Mary's case is another example of how understanding Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory can help advisors. Mary, a sophomore, admits that "nothing is going right." Mary was an honors student in high school. Now, she is floundering academically, has not found a niche, and does not know where to go for help. She admits that she is uncomfortable going to a study group. In addition, she has gained weight and lost confidence. She does not engage in her education and is at the brink of departure.

Mary mastered the intellectual competencies in high school, where they appear to have arrested. Mary needs to recognize that now she cannot take on college challenges by herself. With the first and third vectors in mind, Mary's advisor helps her to recognize that she is interdependent at multiple levels. She may depend on a tutor, a study group, or she may need to talk to her professors. By connecting with any or all of the people available as resources in the college environment, she will begin to develop more mature interpersonal relationships that will support the growth of her intellectual competencies.

The advisor might also learn of Mary's interests and encourage her to get involved in an activity or club. This will help Mary nurture some leadership skills, and will, in turn, help Mary develop the competence and confidence she needs to continue her progress in the fourth vector, identity development.

As an advisor gains experience with Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors, the level of development in the student usually becomes transparent. The advisor is then to find the appropriate levels of challenges and support for the advisee. Success in finding the balance is based on Eltink's Goldilocks theory (personal communication with Jeni Eltink, Director of First Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of Minnesota Duluth, March 3, 2006): "The challenge cannot be too big, it cannot be too small, it should be just right" for the successful growth of the student. With time and experience, advisors recognize the areas of development and the advisee's place on the continua.

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good Q's for facts on

Clark and Trow's Student Subcultures

Student subcultures exist on every campus, and Clark and Trow's (1966) definitions of four dominant student subcultures are straightforward. Because prevalent attitudes of those in each subculture are very clearly illustrated, subculture information helps clarify the motivation of students within the college or university. Clark and Trow emphasized that subcultures are not types of students but rather characteristics of groups of students.

Many advisors have met students who are social fraternity or sorority members, football fans, or part of the "rah rah" culture of a campus. They are very social and generally come from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds. These students are not highly motivated for academic success; they do enough to pass the class and graduate. These students, however, help build spirit and loyalty on campuses and are part of the *collegiate culture*. Clark and Trow (1966) used the football and fraternity weekend as metaphors for the collegiate culture.

Students in the collegiate subculture are not motivated to get good grades because they do not need them. A bright young fraternity member who knows he will be the fourth generation in the family business is not motivated to excel academically. The advisor must understand that academic achievement for students in this group is not a high priority. Upon identifying the collegiate subculture, advisors can apply Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors and formulate some questions about competencies, relationships, and emotional maturity.

Students in the *vocational culture* enroll in institutions to get the degree as efficiently as possible. Many are from working class families, are married with families, and have no time or interest in being involved in the collegiate culture. Their attitude toward college is reflected in comments such as "just tell me what I need to know to get the degree and get a better job." The symbol for the vocational culture is the placement office (Clark & Trow, 1966). These students are usually more interested in identifying the courses to take and may not be interested in a relationship with an advisor, except as an advocate if necessary. Advisors need to respect the drive of the students in the vocational culture; the function of the advisor may be as simple as signing a document or providing degree requirements.

Libraries, laboratories, and seminars serve as symbols for the *academic culture*. Students in this

culture are intellectual; they value relationships with faculty members; they are generally not concerned with potential income as a motivating factor. These students are serious; they study for the sake of learning. Students in the academic culture need and enjoy advisors who are holistic; their advisors should ask them questions about values, motivation, and intellectual competencies. Many of these students aspire to go to graduate or professional schools (Clark & Trow, 1966). These students probably will have their schedules planned semesters in advance, but they may need some guidance in focusing on values, graduate school choices, and careers.

The fourth campus subculture is counter-cultural. The symbols used by Clark and Trow for the *nonconformist culture* are distinctive looks, styles of dress, and attitudes. These students are detached from the campus, the administration, and take on different styles on different campuses. Students in the nonconformist culture are struggling with identity issues (Clark & Trow, 1966). They are usually

passionate about something such as politics, art, or the environment. The advisor should reflect on theories of Schlossberg and ask questions about the values of the nonconforming student. A thoughtful advisor asks open-ended questions about interests of the nonconforming student and guides the student from that point. Advising the nonconforming student provides a good opportunity to apply O'Banion's (1972) model of developmental advising in which one begins by discussing life goals.

Clark and Trow (1966) do not clearly define each subculture; they explain the variances among student involvement and identity with their campuses. Nevertheless, from an advising viewpoint, these four subcultures help advisors understand what students might be seeking in the college or university experience; the subcultures are fairly routine and predictable. Understanding the subcultures also helps advisors understand the attitudes of their advisees.

Advising Styles

Once an advisor is familiar with some theory, does it matter how the advisor advises? Daller et al. (1997) observed 10 professional advisors to assess advising styles they used and to determine the differences between prescriptive and developmental advising as practiced. They observed three primary advising styles and appropriately named them the counselor, the scheduler, and the teacher.

The counselor uses techniques to make the students comfortable. The counselor expresses concern

Subculture information helps clarify the motivation of students within the college or university.

What are you

for the student by asking developmental questions (questions related to Chickering and Reisser's [1993] vectors). Advisors with a counseling style do not generally ask specific schedule-related questions (Daller et al., 1997).

The schedulers are very familiar with policy, procedures, and resources. The scheduler emphasizes appropriate classes and other academic planning issues (Daller et al., 1997).

The teachers coach the students to be responsible for learning about the policies and procedures as well as for their academic plans. Teachers invite discussions that relate to both academic and personal issues, but they clearly leave the decisions to the advisees (Daller et al., 1997).

Daller et al. (1997) observed that while the advisors personalized the advising meetings with advisees, their styles remained consistent. They also observed that each style has a different amount of personalization and placement of responsibility on the advisee. They imply that advisors are to assess their styles, see the limitations of their approach, and over time challenge themselves to expand upon their predominant style, incorporating elements of the other two styles. If, for example, the advisor is a scheduler, she or he might begin by asking a question outside the purview of academic life, "Are you involved in any extracurricular activities?" If the answer is "no," the advisor can ask more questions of interest. The counselor might ask specific questions about the academic schedule, and the teacher might ask the advisee how he or she makes specific decisions.

Advice for Advisors

New advisors should attempt to learn about different theories, student subcultures, and advising styles and talk about them with colleagues. Most advisors find that once an understanding of basic theory begins to make sense, it is a fascinating field that begs for more exploration.

Pragmatic reasons for knowing theory include initiating reasoned and appropriate conversation; that is, an advisor with some knowledge of theory is less inclined to articulate a gut response or inappropriate comment. For example, instead of saying, "You're wrong . . . sorry, but this will never work," an advisor versed in theory might ask, "And why do you think that way?"

Applying developmental theory also places the decision-making responsibility on the advisee. The advisor merely guides the advisee toward making appropriate choices. Advisors familiar with developmental theory coach the advisee; they do not mandate a course of action. Theory-based advising is used to recommend certain behaviors not to prescribe them.

Finally, advisors learn all too quickly that the stages of student development and the borders of student subcultures are fuzzy. Advising is not an exact science, and the theories do not support a pristine approach on guiding students toward making good academic and life decisions. Each advisor and advisee brings her or his own experiences to the table. That is, the art and the science of advising are embodied in an understanding of developmental theories, stages, student cultures, and advising styles and are applied in a workable fashion for the advisor and the advisee.

Characteristics of Effective Advisors

- Genuinely enjoy students
- Relate to advisees of many cultures, ethnicities, educational backgrounds
- Committed to accuracy and clarity
- Open and friendly
- ★ Know their limits and make referrals accordingly
- Excellent listeners
- Organized
- Caring, empathetic
- Reassuring, trustworthy, inspire confidence
- Good memory
- Good sense of humor
- Can deliver hard news in a caring way
- Willing to ask for help
- ★ Good at bringing organization and order to a disorganized process
- Effective communicators
- Creative, innovative
- Calm in a crisis
- ★ Patient, can wait for students to come to their own conclusions
- Detail oriented
- Technologically adept
- Ask probing questions
- ★ Know the right time to present information to students
- A good colleague and collaborator
- Flexible, adaptive
- Good at multitasking
- A quick study
- Nonjudgmental
- *Self Feedback*

These comments are a compilation of responses from academic advisors in the Academic Advising Center at The University of Iowa as well as the Content Review Board for the NACADA New Advisor Guidebook.

What do you think is difference b/w 'giving advice' + 'advising'

Where are you strong - need to improve?



Voices from the Field

Tips for Applying Concepts of Developmental Advising in Practice

Mark Hurley

Kim Roufs and Karen Thurmond have outlined the history and theory behind a developmental approach to academic advising. For new advisors, however, the immediate question is how to apply the concept of developmental advising to their daily contacts with students. I do not pretend to answer that question in full here but offer instead 10 suggestions drawn from practice.

Get Personal

Whenever possible, take time to get to know students as individuals before engaging in academic planning. In an ongoing advising relationship, this might mean devoting all or part of the first advising appointment to a general conversation about the student's goals and past experiences. In shorter, more action-oriented encounters, it may mean simply asking the student how things are going for him or her beyond the issue at hand.

Practice Active Listening

Encourage students to explain or clarify the reasoning behind academic decisions. Be attentive to verbal and nonverbal cues that signal that there may be more to the story.

Treat Advising as an Ongoing Conversation

Take good notes and review them before each subsequent advising appointment. Follow up on previous questions. Take note of continuity and discontinuity in decisions or statements made by the student. Traditional-aged college students often are in the process of identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and may project greater certainty regarding their academic direction than they actually feel.

Avoid the Temptation to Decide

Students who have relied on parents or other authority figures to make decisions for them in the past may look to advisors to play a similar role. Chickering and Reisser (1993), however, pointed to the need for students to develop autonomy as they establish their adult identities. Advisors can and

should help guide students through the decision-making process, but they should avoid the temptation to make decisions for advisees.

Make Silence an Ally

Allow for periods of silence in advising appointments as students process new information or ponder how much to disclose. Resist the temptation to jump in and fill the silence with more questions or prescriptive advice. Also, allow students the time they need between appointments to follow up on referrals or ponder alternatives. Try to be flexible in establishing timetables for decision making.

Challenge Students' Misconceptions

As Perry (1968) suggested, college students progress through several stages of intellectual development. Those who view the world as a stark set of right-wrong dualisms or a multiplicity of equally valid opinions with no basis for deciding among them may arrive at decisions without adequate consideration of alternatives. For example, a student who struggles in an entry-level course in her or his intended major may decide to change majors or even to leave school. By challenging students to examine these decisions further, advisors not only help students make more considered choices but also help them to develop intellectually.

Make Students Active Partners in the Advising Process

Advising is a process, not a product. Advisors know this, but students may require help to understand that advising is not simply a body of information to be imparted but an interactive process between advisor and advisee. Here Krumboltz's learning theory of career decision making (as cited in Gordon, 2006) may be instructive. Krumboltz posited that career advising is a three-step process of inquiring and clarifying academic or career concerns, gathering information, and integrating new and old information to form new knowledge and understanding. By explaining this process to students and enlisting their active participation, advisors can make students partners in the advising relationship.

Challenge and Support

Successful advising relationships evolve over time. Students should be encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own academic planning with varying degrees of advising support. First-year students typically need greater support and more active coaching as they make the transition from high

most advisors think this too.
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school to college. Likewise, graduating seniors may need additional support as they prepare to make the transition from their undergraduate program to the world of work or graduate school.

Make Meaning out of the Curriculum

Although it may seem perfectly clear to faculty members and advisors that study in the sciences should be supported by study in the humanities and social sciences or that study of a foreign language is an integral part of a liberal arts education, students often need help seeing the connections. As Lowenstein (2000, 2005) has argued, a central role of academic advisors is explaining the logic of the curriculum to students. When students understand the reasoning behind degree requirements, they often become less resistant to individual requirements and more invested in courses outside their major or primary field of interest.

Take a Holistic Approach

Although the primary concerns of academic advising are the student's intellectual and academic development, these should not be the only considerations. A student's life beyond the classroom (and beyond the campus) provides the context within which intellectual and academic development occurs. By being aware of this context, advisors are better able to understand their students' actions and to help them make sound academic—and personal—decisions.





Voices from the Field

Developing as a Professional Advisor

Chuck Allen

No one grows up wanting to be an academic advisor. Take me for example. As I entered higher education as a professional, I still was unsure of the job of academic advisors. I had started in student affairs, and after a few years there in student activities, I began looking for a new opportunity. A friend told me about an open advising position in the business school. My immediate thought was "why would anyone want to do that for a living?" I had heard all the stereotypical stories from students: "My advisor told me the wrong classes," and "I didn't graduate on time because of my advisor," among others.

Still, I was looking for a new challenge. After reading the job description and doing a little research, I submitted my resume, went to a few interviews, and lo and behold, I became an academic advisor. When I reported to the office on my first day, the first day of the fall semester, the receptionist thought I was a student. The atmosphere was organized chaos, and I asked, "What am I getting into here?" I found my office, sat in the chair, and I wondered what I was supposed to do.

Up until my first day on the job, my perceptions of advising had been based on secondhand experiences. I had thought advising meant "listen a little, tell students the classes to take, and make sure to not give the wrong advice." I mean, how could one realistically do anything else in the yearly 10 minutes advisors have with each advisee? However, even in the early days as an advisor, I started to realize that I needed to know a lot of information to ensure that I did not give any wrong advice.

As I was contemplating the informational aspects of my new job, I saw the policy section of the university bulletin. Now, I have never tried to read Latin, but I imagine the look on my face would be similar to the one I had after my first pass through that section: Matriculated student? What the heck is this FERPA thing? An IUT? Is that contagious? A student can be dismissed but reinstated? I mean really, the only confounding concept missing was "double-secret probation."

As I began seeing students, I started to wonder if I were missing sections of the bulletin. Perhaps

someone forgot to give me some addenda. Surely there had to be instructions on how to get students to do what they needed to do. Certainly somewhere there must be a guideline for fixing the student on academic probation.

And tears! I never read, saw, or heard anything on how to deal with an emotional student. The first time someone shed tears in front of me, I had no idea what to do. The student was not upset about a class or grade; a bad family situation was taking a toll on the student's desire and ability to succeed. Because I was not expecting the advisee's disclosure and did not know how to handle it, I tried to get the conversation focused back on academics.

Upsetting scenarios would play out several more times in the first few weeks, each with varying degrees of unfamiliarity. At times, I swore to myself that I was going to do everything to help the student. I would go on crusades. Every now and then, I would be able to find a happy resolution to the student's problem, but more often than not, I could not change anything for him or her. Policies and guidelines were in place that I could not get around. I was forced to go back to the student and say that I could not fix it. I would take these episodes as personal defeats and allow the bad feeling to linger for days.

Before long, I was caught up in the 80/20 phenomenon: 80% of my time was taken up by 20% of my students. I was spending an hour with some students, then wondering if we had accomplished anything. I was coming in early and staying late. I took problems home with me. Some days I felt I had expended more energy in seeing students do well than they had spent themselves.

At the same time, I allowed students to come into advising appointments unprepared. I let upperclassmen get away with telling me that they had no plans after graduation. I pardoned the students who did not know the classes they needed to take. I ran and made copies of information sheets for students who had lost them. Basically, I expected little of students and everything of myself.

I also was not prepared for the amount of paperwork that would be involved in the advising job. There were forms for course waiver requests, overload petitions, transferring into the college, and transferring out of the college. Each form was in triplicate. With 30 files on my desk, putting a form back in the correct folder was like solving a jigsaw puzzle.

After a short time, I could feel myself coming undone. I was eating, breathing, and sleeping advising. I thought I just needed to be more efficient in certain areas to make it better. So I came in early one morning and went through all of the student files

This is an easy topic to fall into

Characteristic Responsibilities of Academic Advisors

- Teach success strategies to students
- Develop educational plans that empower students to achieve their objectives
- Teach students to navigate the institutional system
- Assist students in discovering their academic interests
- Listen, plan, study, learn, share, receive, ask questions
- Think outside the box
- Assist students in orientation and registration
- Keep records of conferences
- Research academic programs and careers
- Teach and model decision making and problem solving
- Challenge students to do their best and expand their horizons
- Refer students appropriately
- Advocate to effect policy changes on behalf of students with departments, colleges, and faculty members
- Collaborate with department and office personnel to implement programs for students
- Train other advisors
- Consult with parents
- Participate in campus events
- Develop presentations and programs

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with appointments that day. I tried to anticipate every question. I wrote out classes to take in the upcoming semesters. When the student came in, I was firing information at them left and right. I took their smiles and astonishment as compliments, thinking they were impressed. When I got someone in and out of my office in 5 minutes, I considered it a victory. I convinced myself that this efficient dissemination of information was good advising. I had seen other advisors consistently taking a lot of time talking about anything but classes and grades, and I wondered if I was the only one who had the secret to getting advisees out the door.

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No!

Then I thought that perhaps it was not my personal thoroughness that led to my efficiency; maybe no one else had read about prescriptive advising. This description of advising seemed to make the job easy, right? It likened the advisor-advisee interaction to the doctor-patient relationship. For example, the student tells me the problem. I tell her or him the solution. The problem is solved. There's no grey area. Each student may have a different ailment or problem, but in the end, there is medicine each can take to make it all better.

I have since come to find out two things. One, there are no similar students in advising. Two, even if there were, there would not be a pill box big enough to give them all the dosages they would need to make it all better.

Not long after I came to the realization that the doctor-patient analogy was not working, I started to believe that advising theory could not practically apply in a modern advising setting. Then I came across the term *developmental advising*. Crookston (1994), as well as O'Banion (1994), talked about this notion. Under the developmental paradigm, advising is not based on class selection or timely graduation schedules. It encouraged advisors to ask the extra questions about students' personal and career goals. It fostered more conversation and less dictation in one-on-one interactions.

As I began implementing more of this developmental model into my advising approach, I started to feel that the outcomes were different and more positive than under the prescriptive approach. Maybe a year or so into the job, and wishing it had hit me sooner, I started to understand what advising is supposed to be.

I also started to accept the fact that I was not going to know everything, nor was I expected to be a know-it-all. I started to trust that other professionals could give correct answers too. I learned how to say, "I'm not sure of the answer to that question, so let me see if I can find someone who is." I began to see that it was okay to consistently check resources for program requirements, even if a student was sitting in front of me.

ACADEMIC
ADVISOR

I also began to listen more. Yes, I had heard students in previous situations. I answered their questions, but at times, I was mostly listening to their words. I was not picking up on tone or body language. I also recognized that I needed to start asking more questions. I knew that students specifically came to me with questions to be answered, but I had thought that if I asked questions the meeting would simply drag on too long. I began asking students about their aspirations, their career goals, and the actions that they were taking to meet their objectives.

I found that it was okay to challenge students on a professional level. I began to tell students that they could not come into our advising appointments unprepared. I began to tell them that "just graduating with any degree" was not an acceptable answer when I asked them about their

goals. I started expecting the same from my freshmen as my seniors. "It's never too early to be planning for the rest of your life" was my new mantra.

On top of that, I knew that I needed to make a connection with the student. I tried to find an interest outside of academics. Even if my inquiry only led to a 30-second dialogue, it started a conversation. I used it to set the tone for the meeting. At the same time, I learned that I am not a licensed psychologist or counselor. I have come to know where my limits as a professional end, and I have come to respect where other's roles begin.

In the process of discovering boundaries, I have saved my own mental health and well-being. I began to realize that while my job is important, some parts of it can wait until another day. I began to see my role in the process, and as a result, I was not always going to have immediate answers. These new perspectives allowed me to come in each morning a little more refreshed. More important, they allowed me to begin liking my job a lot more.

I have also seen the value in professional development. The ability to network and connect with other professionals, to hear their stories, to learn about processes outside of one's immediate walls is priceless. After attending my first NACADA regional conference, I started submitting proposals to present at every conference I attended. I found that one need not be a 20-year advising veteran to share information and learn from others. All advisors need to fill their toolboxes with every instrument they can find because he or she never knows when or where that tool is going to be needed.

It took me some time to realize what it means to be a good advisor. I am not sure if I am there yet, but I know that I am constantly working to get better. It had not taken me long to develop a passion for the advising profession. I went from thinking I would do a 2-year stint and then head back to student affairs, to being heavily involved with NACADA at the regional level. I went from seeing advising as a job to seeing it as my career.