



Academic Advising's Integral Role in the Academic Success and Persistence of Students

Webinar Handout

NOTES

Introduction of Presenters

Susan Campbell, NACADA President
Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Southern Maine
scamp@usm.maine.edu

Charlie Nutt, NACADA Interim Executive Director
Assistant Professor
Kansas State University College of Education
cnutt@ksu.edu

Webinar objectives:

Participants will learn:

- the key research that demonstrates the connection between academic advising and student persistence
- strategies to affect change based on the research
- strategies for utilizing the research to influence key administrators

Understanding the Connection between Advising and Student Success

Academic advising is key to the academic success of our students and their successful college experiences; however, the connection is not always clearly understood or clearly articulated on college campuses. Our goals today are twofold:

1. we want to provide you with the foundation for these connections as they are outlined in the literature and research
2. provide you with some information on best practices to assist you in helping your campus realize the potential of academic advising in supporting student persistence and success. For some or even many, this will involve strategies for utilizing this information in changing the culture of your campus.

Literature and Research Foundation

Córdova, F. (2006, Spring). Losing sleep over student success. *The Presidency*. American Council on Education.

Friedman, T. (2005). *The world is flat*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

- Friedman contends that an “ambition gap” is affecting the overall success of US students (US college students are not as hungry for a college degree as their foreign counterparts). Cordova argues (and we agree) that what we face in our colleges is not so much an “ambition gap” or “perseverance gap” as a gap in our student support systems.
- Academic advising is increasingly understood as a vehicle through which to connect and facilitate student immersion and involvement in their college experience which, in turn, can foster student success.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- As far back as 1993, Tinto explained that retention is a by-product of a good educational experience. Thus, our goal is to enhance students' college experiences that enhance their engagement in their education as well as their engagement in their own academic success.

(1984). *Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education*. Final Report of the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Stock No. 065-000-00213-2.

- Seek out a faculty member who can be an intellectual mentor, advisor and a friend.
- Take advantage of advising and counseling services during your first two years. Insist that faculty and other advisors be accessible and that their advice evidences comprehensive knowledge of your abilities, needs and goals.

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., and Whitt, E. (1991). *Involving colleges: Successful approaches to fostering student learning and development outside the classroom*. Washington, D.C.; Jossey-Bass.

- Institutions with reputations of providing rich out-of-class learning environments have:
 - Mission and Philosophy- *focused, clear & articulatable*
 - Value & Expect Student Initiative and Responsibility – *high & reasonable—and accountable*
 - Respond to the Total Student Experience – *learning does not occur in a vacuum*
 - Provide Small, Human-scale Environments & Multiple Subcommunities – *even within large institutions*
 - Value Students and Their Learning - *respect*
 - Generate Feelings of Loyalty & Specialness – *distinctive*
- Conclusion: *“Institutions that value and expect student initiative and responsibility encourage involvement.”*
- Recommendation: *Campuses “spend less time designing and implementing programs and more time encouraging students to take advantage of learning opportunities.”*
- *“Involving Colleges”....’recognize and respond to the total student experience.”*

Light, R. (2001). *Making the most out of college: Student speak their minds*. Harvard University Press.

- Based on ten years of qualitative research with over 1,600 students, Light asserts that “Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.”

Muraskin, L. and Lee, J. (2004, December.) Raising the graduation rates of low-income college students. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Retrieved September 1, 2007 from http://www.pellinstitute.org/gradrates/Pell_Web.pdf.

- Institutions with higher than expected graduate rates have three things in common:
 1. High student participation in advising and counseling
 2. Intentional academic planning process
 3. Educational innovations that assist students' learning
- Points to the integral role that academic advising and academic planning plays in students' academic success and their ultimate graduation from an institution.

Tinto, V. (2004, July). Student retention and graduation; Facing the truth, living with the consequences. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. Retrieved September 1, 2007 from <http://www.pellinstitute.org/tinto/TintoOccasionalPaperRetention.pdf>.

- Institutions focused on student persistence all have programs and initiatives that teach students how to:
 1. effectively make decisions and maneuver the system
 2. make decisions about careers and/or majors
 3. identify and utilize campus resources and assistance
- This study is important for our work on campus for two reasons:
 1. The skills and knowledge outlined are clearly within the curriculum of academic advising
 2. This study points to academic advising as a teaching and learning process
- Based on 25 years of research on student retention and success, Tinto explains four advising-relate key institutional behaviors that enhance the college experiences of students:
 1. Providing students clear guidelines as to what they have to do to be successful thorough strong academic advising programs linked to the needs of all students
 2. Providing academic, social, and personal support
 3. Assessing institutional and student activities to determine impact of the college experiences
 4. Involving students with other students, faculty, and staff in intentional and deliberate ways that pay particular attention to student learning.

Tinto, V. (1999, Fall). Taking retention seriously: Rethinking the first year of college. *NACADA Journal*, v19 n2 p5-9.

- Good advising is one of the key conditions that promotes retention for it reflects an institution's commitment to the education of students.

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., and Whitt, E. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. Washington, D.C.; Jossey-Bass.

- Academic advising is a way to connect students to the campus and help them feel that someone is looking out for them.
- Regardless of the institutional type or student body, academic advising is key to a successful college experience for all students.
- Six conditions that matter to student success:
 - I. "Living" Mission and "Lived" Educational Philosophy
 - II. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
 - III. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
 - IV. Clear Pathways to Student Success
 - V. Improvement-Oriented Ethnos
 - VI. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality and Student Success

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Buckley, J., Bridges, B., and Hayek, J. (2007). *Piecing together the student success puzzle: Research, propositions, and recommendations*: ASHE Higher Education Report, Volume 32, Number 5. Washington, D.C.; Jossey-Bass.

- "Structured Academic advising is important for helping students find their way through college at both two- and four-year institutions."
- Regardless of the organizational model or mode of delivery, they conclude that advising is positively related to student success.

McCormick, A. (2003). Swirling and double-dipping: New patterns of student attendance and their implications for higher education. *New Directions for Higher Education* 121, 13-24.

- Advisors are particularly important in helping students plan their educational program and addressing question of coherence and sequencing.

(2002). *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, D.C.; Association of American Colleges and Universities.

(2005). *Exploring different dimensions of student engagement*. National Survey of Student Engagement 2005 Annual Report. Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Retrieved September 1, 2007 from http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2005_Annual_Report/index.cfm.

- The quality of academic advising is the single most powerful predictor of satisfaction with the campus environment for students at four-year schools
- Students who rate their advising as good or excellent:
 - Are more likely to interact with faculty in various ways,
 - Perceive the institution's environment to be more supportive overall,
 - Are more satisfied with their overall college experience, and
 - Gain more from college in most areas.

Thomas, L. (2005). Widening participation and the increased need for personal tutoring. In Thomas, L. & Hixenbaugh, P. (Eds.), *Personal tutoring in higher education*. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books.

- Academic Advising can provide
 - information about higher education processes, procedures, and expectations
 - guidance and structure, especially in the early days of the college experience.

Macfarlane, B. (2007). *The academic citizen: The virtue of service in university life*. New York: Routledge Publishing.

- Teaching involves engaging with students as persons and not just depositories of learning and, thus, academic advisors are the most significant "actor" in determining whether students persist.

Lowenstein, M. (2005). If advising is teaching, what do advisors teach? *NACADA Journal*, 25 (2), 65-73.

- "An excellent advisor does the same for the students' entire curriculum that the excellent teacher does for one course."

What do we need to do?

NACADA Concept of Academic Advising (2006). (Provided with the pre-webinar material.)

- Key message: as a teaching and learning experience, academic advising has a
 - Curriculum
 - Pedagogy
 - Set of Learning Outcomes
- Provide opportunities for campus dialogue and conversation
- What do we want students to demonstrate they know, can do, and value as a result of participating in academic advising.

De Sousa, D. (2005). *Promoting student success: What advisors can do*. Occasional Paper No. 11. Project DEEP. NSSE Institute. Retrieved September 1, 2007 from http://bl-surv-george.ads.iu.edu/NSSE_INSTITUTE/?view=deep/briefs.

- Six principles:
 1. Adopt a talent development approach to academic advising.
 2. Think of advising as if it were a tag team activity – share the responsibility and the kudos for student success
 3. Help students map out a path to success – develop an institutional “map quest”
 4. Focus on meaningful interactions with students -- ensure that every interaction is meaningful.
 5. Connect students to co-curricular learning opportunities, as what happens outside the classroom influences learning inside the classroom
 6. Recognize that advising is a cultural and culture-bound activity.

Kuh, G. D. (2007). *Foundations: Advising for Student Success*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

- Starting Point Questions:
 1. To what extent does your institutional culture promote and support a talent development philosophy of teaching, learning and advising?
 2. How well does your advising system work? How do you know?
 3. Are advising resources arranged to maximize students' potential?
 4. To what degree do the advising system and the efforts of individual advisors complement other institutional student success initiatives?
 5. To what extent do advisors challenge students to go beyond what they are expected to do in college?
 6. In what ways do academic advisors interact with students? Does the interaction appear meaningful?
 7. To what extent do advisors contribute to programs and activities that socialize first-year students to academic expectations of the institution?
 8. To what extent do advisors encourage students to take advantage of curricular and co-curricular diversity experiences to enhance the quality of students' learning?
 9. What are you not doing with your advising program that you should?

Kuh, G. (2005). *Promoting student success: What campus leaders can do*. Occasional Paper No. 1. Project DEEP. NSSE Institute. Retrieved September 1, 2007 from the World Wide Web at http://bl-surv-george.ads.iu.edu/NSSE_INSTITUTE/?view=deep/briefs.

- Supporting Quality Academic Advising:
 1. Student success is everybody's business – as is academic advising.
 2. Feature student success in the institution's mission and vision statements – academic advising mission and vision statements must connect directly to the institutional mission of student success.
 3. Frequently remind the campus of the institution's commitment to enhancing the quality of the undergraduate experience, including the academic advising experiences of our undergraduate students.
 4. Scale up policies, programs, and practices that work – what works in academic advising – and recreate those experiences for all students across the institution
 5. Cultivate an ethic of continuous improvement – “what is measured gets attention” – develop assessment programs for academic advising that focuses not only on the program but on the student learning
 6. Put someone in charge – especially true with academic advising – if no one has that authority then no one has the responsibility.
 7. Recruit faculty and staff who are committed to student learning and student success --- and academic advising. Questions: Is academic advising listed as an essential role for faculty positions? Are candidates for faculty positions asked

questions during the interview process concerning their philosophies and/or experiences with academic advising?

8. Create space for differences – institutional focus on advising doesn't mean centralized advising.
9. Stay the course!!!

Best Practices

I. Adopting a Talent Development Approach.

*Strategy: Learn about your students' interests, skills, abilities
Build it into your advising process*

II. Facilitating Campus Collaboration – Tag Team

Strategy: Intentionally design committee with cross-divisional representation

Set Action-Oriented Agendas to include discussions of:
- Policies & procedures that serve as barriers or enhance student engagement/success
- Academic Advising Issues

III. Designing and Supporting Intentionality of Practice

Clarity of Expectations for Academic Advising

Strategy: Design hiring practices to include expectations regarding academic advising.

Develop materials that identify and promote the mission, goals, outcomes for advising AS WELL AS the expectations for advisors and for students

Intentional Connections with Students

Strategy: Identify creative ways to connect advisors with students in ways that respond to how students connect

Advisor Training and Development

Strategy: Develop hands-on strategies for comprehensive conversations on advising

Link advisor development to student learning outcomes

IV. Using Data to Benchmark and Improve

Strategy: Create strategies for gathering and tracking data to benchmark achievements

- Identify what you want to improve*
- Identify metric for success*
- Create strategies to gather and track data*
- Revisit data for improvement*