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Advising Non-Traditional Students: Beyond Class Schedules and Degree Requirements

Lorneth Peters, Austin Peay State University

MeHee Hyun, Antioch University Los Angeles

Sylvie Taylor, Antioch University Los Angeles

Jennifer Varney, Chair, Advising Adult Learners Commission



Editor's Note: Advisors and advising administrators who work with non-traditional learners will want to register for the February 2nd Webinar to be presented by Advising Adult Learners Commission Chair **Jennifer Varney** and Past-Chair **Lisa Peck**: *Academic Advising for Student Retention and Persistence: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Adult Learners*. Learn more about this event at www.nacada.ksu.edu/Webinars/W37.htm.

At one time the term "non-traditional student" referred to a small number of older adults who registered for night classes and occasionally asked for advising. Today, the academy has broadened the definition for *non-traditional student*, and we have reassessed their needs. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) reported that at least 73 percent of undergraduates have at least one "non-traditional" characteristic: not enrolling in college immediately after high school graduation, working full-time, being financially independent, having dependents, being a single parent, or not possessing a high school diploma. Non-traditional students also are disproportionately first generation and students of color.

Unlike many traditional students who were raised with college completion as a primary goal, these non-traditional learners may not have viewed higher education as a part of their development or life trajectory. Non-traditional students often enroll in college during a period of transition, e.g., during a divorce, change in job/career, pregnancy, recent birth of a child, as young children become more independent, or when older children leave home. These non-traditional students may have limited support from their families and communities for their academic goals. They may be greatly restricted by their limited understanding of higher education, inappropriate advice from members of their support system, or responsibilities that compete with their academic work.

We, as advisors, play an important role in the success of these students. It is critical that we reflect upon our advisor preparation and expectations if we are to help these students succeed. To aid us in this reflection we offer the following

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That's a Wrap. Onward to Orlando.

Jayne Drake, NACADA President



There is a tradition among NACADA presidents to use the September issue of *Academic Advising Today* to wrap up their year as president by casting a long look back—a kind of year in review—and sometimes by peering as far as the eye can see into the future. This opportune moment provides presidents with a chance to take stock, to reflect on where the Association has been and where it is going. This moment provides a unique opportunity to stand on tiptoe, if you will, and scan NACADA from horizon to horizon, to take a good look at the people, places, and things that have shaped our past and present, and will likely influence our future. Now it is my turn. I would like to highlight three important initiatives this year that have altered both the face and the internal workings of the Association in significant ways. They represent big changes in the way we come together—the way NACADA helps “translate” the world and how we connect to the important issue of student success. It has been a very busy year for NACADA.

Perhaps the most visible change this year is the addition of a tag line “The Global Community for Academic Advising” to our iconic acronym. This addition represents the growing influence of NACADA in meeting the interests and needs of advising / personal tutoring / counseling professionals in higher education globally. It also signals the importance of NACADA’s reach and influence across the world as represented by Association members from more than 30 countries. My travels from Liverpool to Tokyo and points in between have shown that the advising issues, interests, and concerns common to campuses in the United States are the same throughout the world—the educational needs, the academic growth, and persistence of students and how best to ensure they are addressed. NACADA truly represents “The Global Community for Academic Advising,” and so the coming years should see the inclusion of more international members gathered around our common goal of student success.

Accompanying this tagline is the responsibility of extending our reach thoughtfully and intentionally. To that end, NACADA’s Board of Directors has invited **Glenn Kepic**, our incoming Vice President, to assemble a taskforce on the globalization of the Association made up of NACADA members from literally around the world. Its charge, among other matters, is to expand the number of countries and institutions involved in the Association, to develop strategies for increasing the involvement by our international members through our publications and other resources, and to determine the best technologies to cultivate and maintain our relationships around the world. We are grateful to those serving on our Globalization Taskforce for their good work in thinking through these and other important issues.

The second major change that I would like to comment on is how NACADA has deftly responded to the global economic downturn. With budget belts tightening on campuses around the world, it has been more difficult for our members to travel great distances to attend our professional development events. So, we determined that if our members could not come to us, then we would take “NACADA Near You.” From our ten Regional Conferences (which you turned out for in record numbers), our two Summer Institutes in Philadelphia and St. Louis (which were bursting at the seams), to the Research Symposiums, the Retention Seminar, Assessment Institute, and our fourth annual International Conference, NACADA was there to provide important professional development opportunities.

This year, we brought NACADA Near You by expanding our offerings. From new Pocket Guides and monographs to an ambitious number of Webcasts centered on the theme of “Reaching and Retaining Students,” these efforts were coordinated by the NACADA Executive Office staff. Many NACADA members participated in the Association’s Webcast series that drew the highest attendance of any series to date, with hundreds and hundreds of computers tuned in from across the United States and Canada, as well as in countries as far reaching as South Africa and Australia. The coming year is shaping up to be yet another amazing opportunity for NACADA to reach the membership with two new Webcast series: “Foundations of Academic Advising” (four Webcasts) and “Academic Advising for Student Retention and Persistence” (five Webcasts). **Nancy King**, former President of NACADA, and I have the great pleasure of kicking off these events with a “Foundations” Webcast on September 16th entitled *Building the Framework: Advising as a Teaching and Learning Process*. No matter where you are in the world,

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From the Executive Office

A Year Filled with Opportunities and Challenges

Charlie Nutt, NACADA Executive Director



As we prepare for the start of a new academic year and for NACADA's 34th Annual Conference in Orlando, it is a great opportunity to reflect on the past year in our Association and in higher education. This has been a year filled with opportunities and challenges as we have faced continued cuts in funding, more students enrolling in higher education, and a global focus on student persistence to graduation and completion.

This has been a busy and very productive year for the Association. We have continued to demonstrate our global focus as evidenced through the new tag line for **NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising**. We have adopted the new logo you see in this AAT issue and are exploring opportunities to support NACADA allied associations in several international countries. We also continue our growth with our Canadian colleagues as allied associations in Canada continue to grow and prosper. In addition, I am pleased to announce that both Region 6 and Region 8 will hold their regional conferences in Canada in 2011. Beginning with this AAT issue, we will have at least one article from our international members on academic issues from a global perspective. It is exciting to see NACADA expand its influence in the global community.

In addition to our global focus, just a few of NACADA's other

accomplishments this year have been:

- The publication of a new pocket guide entitled *The Role of Academic Advising in Student Retention and Persistence*.
- In spite of severe winter storms across the country, we had record attendance at our winter events in February, including our Seminar on Student Retention, Administrators' Institute, and Assessment Institute.
- Our 10 Region Conferences this spring had a record attendance of 2963 participating.
- We held two Research Symposiums and two Technology Seminars in conjunction with Regions 2, 3, 4, and 8 this year, and all had sold out capacity.
- Our Season 4 Webcast Series "Reaching and Retaining Students" had a record enrollment with nearly every webcast of the Spring semester being sold out; webcasts reached over 475 institutions and had a viewing audience of over 12,000. NACADA's webcasts continue to be the most cost effective in the webcast industry, and all NACADA webcast presenters are advisors and academic advising administrators working in the field on college and university campuses.
- The 2nd Volume of NACADA's *Scenes for Reflection and Learning* DVD has been produced; this addition to the advisor development series will be on sale at our Annual Conference in Orlando.
- The 2nd Edition of NACADA's monograph *Comprehensive Advisor Training and Development: Practices That Deliver* has been completed and will debut at our Annual Conference in Orlando.
- Over 300 participants from institutions around the globe attended our two Academic Advising Summer Institutes this summer.
- We expanded our support of graduate students within the field by offering scholarships for graduate students to attend not only our Region Conferences but also our Annual Conference in Orlando and our Research Symposiums in 2011.

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2010 Best of Region Winners

NACADA 34th Annual Conference on Academic Advising

- Reg. 1: Meeting Students Where They Are: Effective Programs that Enhance Advising
Bentley University
- Reg. 2: Many Leaders Under One Tent: A Statewide Approach to the Shifting Sands of Advising
Carroll Community College, Community College of Baltimore, Frederick Community College
- Reg. 3: Stressors, College Students and Advisors
Murray State University
- Reg. 4: Get Ready to Work: The Development and Implementation of a Career Focused Peer Mentor Program
University of Florida
- Reg. 5: Roadtrip: Take the Ride of Your Life!
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Reg. 6: Confessions of an Advisor: Doing My Job While Keeping My Sanity
Dickinson State University
- Reg. 7: Beyond Chickering: Intercultural Theory as a Tool for Advising International Students
University of Texas-San Antonio
- Reg. 8: Build Better Advising Relationships through Blogging
University of Oregon
- Reg. 9: Going Native (Digitally): Utilizing Hybrid and Assessment Practices to Foster Student Success
California State University-Fullerton
- Reg. 10: Distance Advising for Students and Advisors
University of Utah



INTERNATIONAL VANTAGE POINT: In this edition, four authors consider significant aspects of living and learning in the global community. Study Abroad Interest Group Member **Ian Keil** begins by asking the basic question: *Why is study abroad so fundamentally important?* Next NACADA Emerging Leader **Yung-Hwa Anna Chow**, originally from Taiwan, discusses what North American academic advisors can do to better serve international students from China. Then, **Courtney Yount McGinnis** looks at the effects of visa status on international student success. Finally, **Sue Robbins** of Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom shares her perspective with a UK example of proactive personal tutoring.

Raising the Bar: Why is Study Abroad so Fundamentally Important?

Ian B. Keil, Study Abroad Interest Group Member



While studying abroad in Salzburg, Austria, I quickly learned that professors in Europe had different expectations than professors in the United States. Each course had but one final exam which determined my grade for the entire semester. Syllabi were sketchy documents and important material had to be deciphered from each professor's lecture. I

learned very quickly the value of working with classmates to determine important material and how to study for exams. The Austrian educational system was foreign to me, and it took some adjustments before I felt comfortable in my classes.

In the dorms, I met people from across the globe. My roommate was from Egypt, and one of our first discussions, a conversation in broken German, revolved around Palestinian and Israeli issues. Social interactions took on a whole new meaning when I was forced to translate every word from English to German in my head. I was forced to keep my sentences simple; my Pictionary skills became legendary. The most important lesson I learned while studying abroad was the importance of adaptation. I had to adapt to the new system, because, no matter how hard I tried, the system would never adapt to me. The social and analytical skills I acquired while studying abroad prepared me for many of the academic hurdles I would encounter later on in my academic career.

Adaptability is a simple word that encompasses many of the fundamental elements needed for success in college and life. The world has a way of sending us unexpected experiences; successful navigation of these experiences is dependent upon our ability to adapt and adjust. One key role for academic advisors is helping students adjust to their new college environment. Just like studying abroad, incoming college students are exposed to completely new environments. They

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Ni How: What Academic Advisors Can Do To Better Serve International Students from China

Yung-Hwa Anna Chow, NACADA Emerging Leader



An advisor from Washington State University shared a recent encounter with a student from China. "One day, I had one too many triple lattes," she explained. "I was going 100 miles an hour telling this student his requirements and what he needed to do. When I was done, this poor student very politely said 'I don't understand a word you just said.'"

The advisor responded "look, I wrote it all down for you, too." To which the student noted "I'm very sorry, but I don't understand what you wrote." With the continued increase in international students, especially those from China, many academic advisors may have had a similar experience. Often we are unsure if students understand what we have said or if they feel comfortable seeking help from us. It would be helpful if we understood their educational experiences if we are to work effectively with them.

Since 2001, China has sent the second largest number of students to study in the U.S., behind only India (Open Doors 2009a, ¶ 1). Last year, international students contributed \$17.8 billion to the U.S. economy, and 70% of all international students' primary funding comes from sources outside of the U.S. (Open Doors 2009b, ¶ 12). Not surprisingly, international students are actively recruited to North American universities and colleges, not only because they generate revenue in tough economic times, but because they increase diversity and cultural exposure for our domestic students.

An overwhelming majority of international students from China have had some college education before arriving in America (Open Doors, 2009, Table 3); thus, it is helpful to learn about the Chinese education system. China, since ancient times, has placed great importance in education (Luo and Wendel, 1999,

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Visa Status and Its Effect on International Student Academic Success

Courtney M. Yount McGinnis, University of Delaware



In the 2008-2009 school year, the number of international students attending U.S. institutions for the first time increased by 15.8%. 671,616 international students were enrolled, representing 3.7% of all undergraduate students throughout the country (Open Doors 2009 Fast Facts). For many advisors, the increased international presence on campuses is both exciting and

challenging as they adjust to meeting the needs of an entirely different population of students; a population that, while linked, has immensely different backgrounds and traditions. Good advising for international students is crucial and is often handled by academic advisors who may or may not be trained in meeting the unique hurdles these students face. This article focuses on the impact of visa status on academic choices available to international students enrolled in U.S. institutions.

Many academic advisors face a steep learning curve as they begin to experience an increase in international student advisees. Training in immigration law and student visa status is not a standard for academic advisors. However, it is important when meeting with these students that advisors understand how the student entered the country and what the student must do in order to stay. This information is extremely relevant as some of the academic options available to traditional students may not be available for international students due to immigration law. Furthermore, many of these students may have little knowledge of the regulations they must follow.

Most international undergraduate students will enter the United States with an F-1 visa status unless they are participating in an exchange program. An F-1 visa is issued to students enrolling full-time in programs that result in a degree, diploma, or certificate at an accredited institution. In the higher education setting, these programs typically include full-time matriculated study in a degree program as well as English as a Second Language programs that are offered on many campuses. To obtain an F-1 visa, students must provide proof that they have sufficient funds available for self-support during the entire proposed course of study and must maintain residence abroad which they have no intention of giving up (Students and Exchange Visitors).

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The Importance of Face-to-Face Contact Between Faculty and Students: UK Example of Pro-active Personal Tutoring

Sue Robbins, Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom



For most students, starting university is exciting, daunting, challenging scary-fun! Students come to university from a wide variety of backgrounds and prior educational experience. How can we help them understand our university culture – what we expect of them as students, the academic requirements of their discipline?

When they arrive, most students want to explore their surroundings and fit in with their peers. Their priority is to make friends and build the networks that will support them during their time at university. Most are not able to absorb the stacks of information we bombard them with in Freshers' Week (orientation week). So how are we to communicate important information and support them during this big transition to university?

I am a biochemistry lecturer in a UK university – member of faculty in US terminology – with a passion for the well-being of students. This drives my work in supporting students and has led to my role as Head of Student Support in our School of Life Sciences. In UK universities, it is the norm that faculty are Personal Tutors (academic advisors) named to assist a specific group of students (Hixenbaugh, 2008). The role of Personal Tutor varies from place to place, but the emphasis is on being available to give each assigned tutee (advisee) academic advice, someone to go to if they are having problems that interfere with their ability to study effectively, and to be an academic role model in their discipline.

At my university we have this traditional model of Personal Tutoring, with all academic staff assigned new tutees annually as freshers arrive and move through university to graduation. In Life Sciences, this system seemed to work well for decades: students came to talk over their academic programmes, make changes, have us sign appropriate forms, and have a chat about how they were getting on. Through this contact at the beginning and end of each term we got to know our tutees, and they were comfortable coming to us if they had problems. Then, early this millennium, things began to change.

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Using Emerging Technologies to Engage Students and Enhance Their Success

Rey Junco, Lock Haven University

Editor's Note: Rey will be the opening Keynote Speaker at our Annual Conference in Orlando in October. For more information, see www.nacada.ksu.edu/annualconf/2010/index.htm.



I am always interested in trying new things, especially in the domains of technology and education. That's why, when I agreed to write this article, I thought I'd try writing it completely on an iPad. I really don't know what that's going to be like; however, I'm willing to give it a shot. And that idea segues nicely into the major point I'd like to make: don't be afraid to experiment with new ways of using technology and social media in educationally relevant ways.

My research focuses on using emerging technologies to help engage students and enhance their success in higher education. Some people who learn about my research before meeting me think I'm going to be a digital evangelist. On the contrary; I prefer to be engaged with my students in realspace (*i.e.*, the classroom) and realtime. That being said, I am interested in meeting students where they are using technologies that are meaningful to them in order to enhance our face-to-face interactions.

In the early days of the Web, the primary activity was Web surfing—an oftentimes solitary experience. Then, we saw the development of personal publishing tools such as blogs, and the interactivity of the Web blossomed. Fast forward to today, where we live in the time of the social Web. The social aspect of today's Internet is expressed through the popularity of social media and content creation Web sites like Twitter, Facebook®, YouTube®, flickr, Last.fm, and blogs.

As the Internet has expanded to reach more of the population, I have been curious about the power of technology to bring people together. I've long theorized that social networking Web site use was not a "waste of time," but an important vehicle for student self-expression and connection. We now have evidence that this is the case. Both Heiberger & Harper (2008) and the Higher Education Research Institute (2007) found that time spent on social networking Web sites was correlated with indices of student engagement. Additionally, Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) discovered that Facebook® use was related to an increase in engagement with students' supportive social ties. I've recently completed an experimental study of using Twitter in the classroom and found similar results.

What does this mean for advisors? I believe there are three major issues that impact the use of technology in educationally relevant ways. First, we aim to engage our students in the advising process and hope that they will remain engaged and thinking about their academic trajectory when we are not

around. Consider the advisees who come to their advising meeting having "done their homework" and present us with a list of courses they are thinking of taking that shows they have researched general education requirements, prerequisites, etc. Now consider the students who come to their advising appointments, sit down, and wait for us to tell them what courses to take. Clearly there is a difference in engagement level between the two.

Second is the reality of the economic hardships faced by our institutions. Even before the current economic downturn, many of us did not have enough resources to provide quality advising to all of the students in our caseload. Advising is a resource-intensive task, yet resource allocation for advising has diminished steadily over the last decade.

Third, and most importantly, is our desire to meet our students "where they are." In today's interconnected and wired society, meeting them "where they are" means engaging our students in their online spaces. A significant barrier to this has been the gap between advisee and advisor adoption of new technologies. Luckily for us, the last few years have seen a normalization of the adoption curve, especially among older Internet users. This has led to a more general societal awareness and openness to using social media, and the institutional resistance to using social media with students has been replaced with a desire to connect with them using these technologies.

The convergence of these three issues presents a call to action to integrate technologies into our repertoire of effective advising tools. With the tools we have at our disposal, we can help students maintain a level of engagement with their advisors that provides an unparalleled student experience. For example, we can employ YouTube® video introductions to advisors, maintain wikis that explain the details of the advising process, and leverage Twitter feeds and Facebook® pages to broadcast important information, respond to student queries, and develop a realspace to digital relationship with our students.

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Calling all academic advising researchers...

Faculty Administrators Professional Advisors Graduate students

Consider submitting a manuscript based upon the results of your work for consideration in the *NACADA Journal*.

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Advising Administration at a Time of Financial Crisis

Joel Carr, Gayle Juneau, Nancy Markee, and Margaret Pentecost, Advising Administration Commission Members



Higher education funding issues are front page news in many states. Governors and state legislatures have been faced with unprecedented declines in state revenues as the result of the global economic recession. Prah (2009) estimated that states faced an estimated \$215 billion in budget gaps for fiscal years 2009 and 2010. Keller (2009), reporting on the results of an Association of Public Land-Grant Universities survey, noted that administrators at more than 55% of the 188 member universities thought that cuts in state appropriations harmed their ability to sustain student services. As state budgets decrease and endowments shrink, advising administrators face difficult student services and staffing decisions. Here we focus on how institutions in two states are handling these budget shortfalls.

Nevada

Institutions that are part of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) have experienced twenty plus percent budget cuts over the past two years. The impact has included elimination of open positions, the introduction of employee furloughs, increased class sizes, reductions in student services, and elimination of academic programs. During this same time period, undergraduate enrollment numbers increased at both the University of Nevada Reno (UNR) and the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV). This is at a time when Nevada is projected to have the greatest growth in high school graduates of all states over the next ten years.

The guiding principle in determining budget cuts at UNR has been minimizing the overall damage to the university. When budget cuts resulted in the closure of the University's Career Development Center, responsibility for career services shifted to each academic college. Budget cuts also resulted in the loss of centralized pre-professional advising services. This has especially impacted students and faculty advisors within health-related areas. Faculty advisors are currently working

with student leaders to ascertain the most viable mechanisms for providing assistance to students seeking entrance to health-related professional programs.

While UNR student services provided by the Writing Center, the Math Center, and Tutoring have been eliminated, reduced, or are now available on a fee basis, the university continues to place increased emphasis on retention and the role quality academic advising plays in student persistence, success and timely graduation. Some support services have been partially restored through increases in student fees. However, other retention initiatives have been added to advisors' responsibilities. Elimination of academic programs has required advisors to work closely with students currently enrolled in impacted majors to develop viable plans for degree completion or to assist in the selection of acceptable alternative programs of study.

At UNLV, the student to academic advisor ratio had been relatively manageable at 1:700. As advisors leave the university, the hiring freeze has prevented filling vacant positions. As a result, the wait for advising appointments is longer and advising appointments are shorter; the focus of these appointments is shifting. It may seem an oxymoron that as advisor-student ratios increase, critical emphasis is placed on the implementation of retention-based programs. Still, there is growing anxiety among academic advisors about their professional futures. Academic advisors sense that their positions are vulnerable; should administrators need to choose to eliminate a position, advisors feel that faculty will more likely be retained.

Texas

In Texas, state agencies, including public colleges and universities, experienced a five percent budget reduction in 2010 and additional budget reductions are expected. Haurwitz (2010) noted that some higher education institutions responded by laying off staff. At Angelo State University (ASU), a primarily residential university with approximately 6,400 students, budgets have tightened and academic advising has been reorganized. Rather than downsizing, ASU committed to the expansion of academic advising.

Through a student instructional enhancement fee, academic advisors were added to the university's staff. Academic advising moved from primarily a departmental faculty advising model to a college specific advising model. This restructuring resulted in an overall increase of five professional advisors at ASU. With the exception of a few professional programs (e.g., nursing, social work, and graduate programs where departmental faculty continue to provide academic advising), advisors are now assigned to the various colleges and perform advising duties once provided by the faculty. In addition, ASU continues to maintain three centralized university advisors for undeclared students.

These moves demonstrate ASU's commitment to academic advising, and more importantly, student success. Moreover, the reorganization of academic advising at ASU allows faculty to engage in increased research activity, develop new teaching strategies, and enhance mentor relationships with students. It

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Understanding Arts Training: Beyond “Soft” Skills

Shaun M. McCracken, Virginia Commonwealth University



I recently had a conversation with a colleague, the director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Discovery Program for Undeclared students, who was looking for a way to help his population understand the day-to-day reality of being an arts student. What skills are truly needed beyond the technical jargon posted on audition and portfolio Web sites? Let's

be honest, I can tell a student that he or she needs to memorize two contrasting monologues of one minute each for the Theatre Performance program . . . but the audition is a nano-second in the course of the arts training.

As an “arts” advisor, I frequently speak with parents about the “practicality” of an arts degree. Many parents want to know exactly what their student can “do” with a degree in Music, Theatre, or Dance. Parents understand the reality of the current economic climate, and they understand the hard truths of the job market. All too often, parents are locked into the idea that their student should do something “practical” so the student can earn a living. Parents need assistance to see that the skills the student learns in an arts program have merit in non-arts fields.

Much of the literature provided to arts advisors (and to undeclared advisors talking with potential arts students) addresses how students can translate their “arts” skills (*i.e.* “soft” skills) into the business world. Yes, arts students generally are better at critical thinking, communicating and understanding ideas, collaboration, leadership (not to disparage my colleagues in Business), and public speaking. But there are skills we are forgetting; skills that when viewed in a different light provide clues to solving BOTH problems we have discussed. These skills include:

- **Idea Synthesis.** Arts students learn to compile data (often in text, image, and sound form) and synthesize that data in new and compelling ways. They do that in dance, graphic arts, fashion, film, music, and theatre. Oh, and they will probably need those skills in the business world too!
- **Focus.** No one can focus (when they want to) like an arts student. Are we capable of spending three hours standing in front of a mirror working to position our feet like a dance student? Are we willing to spend 20+ man-hours on one project like the graphic arts student? That focus comes in

handy when these students are given a task in the 9-to-5 job world too!

- **Visualization/Interpretation.** Can we see a constant movie in our heads? Can we, with deliberation and accuracy, slow down that movie and notate everything that is happening? A film major can. This ability to visualize an artistic ideal is necessary for every artist (the artist should say to himself, “THIS is how I want it to be,” and then make it happen.) The ability to visualize ideas is vital no matter where we work.
- **Physical Mirroring/Detailed Correcting.** Most artists understand that the smallest features in their work can help them attain perfection. The ability to look at something, identify a specific problem, and correct it on a finite scale is vital to the artist AND to the working professional.
- **Specificity.** When an artist walks into a room and participates in “group work,” we hear her say (with sometimes alarming frequency), “give me the specifics . . . Let’s talk about THIS THING . . .” The focus and correction of detail discussed earlier color the artist’s view on any project. Artists are capable of focusing on, and correcting, specific areas of a project (be it a concerto, a monologue, a pas de deux, or a painting). This specific, focused approach is part of our artistic methodology. A musician cannot work on an entire symphony at one time; she must work in pieces.

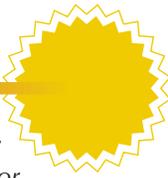
So what do students do in the arts besides learning music, painting pictures, and telling stories? They focus on their work in the most intimate ways possible. They open their minds and (more painfully) their hearts to the creative process. They allow others to judge their work and they judge others (what non-arts people call “critical thinking”). They spend hours in front of mirrors. They know their strengths and weaknesses better than the individual with an accounting degree, and, at the end of the day, they can sit down and **work** with that person.

As advisors working with students in the arts, and their parents, it is incumbent that we stress the connections between theory and practice. We must encourage our students to look beyond the day-to-day practicalities of their arts training and understand *why* they do what they do. We must teach our students how to “spin” their arts training so they may become more effective participants in the global job market. And, finally, we must encourage parents to look beyond the “practical” concerns to support their student’s true passion.

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Sparklers



It takes but one **SPARK** to ignite the flame for an idea. *Does your campus have an unusual or exceptional process or program that could spark an idea on another campus?* If so, tell us about it in **350 words or less**. Send your '**Sparkler**' to LEIGH@KSU.EDU.

This edition's SPARKLER comes from **Ben Littlepage** (Dyersburg State Community College).

Ben Littlepage, Director of Advising Centers/Career Counselor at Dyersburg State Community College in Dyersburg, TN, reports that in a ten-day period in May 2010, faculty advisors at his institution completed a 37.5 hour Master Advisor training program. Among the participants were both newly-hired and experienced advisors, as well as an extended campus director. Ben explains that "all participants invested time in the program for one simple purpose: to improve academic advising practices and knowledge so advisors are better equipped to assist all students regardless of academic interests or individual characteristics." The first two weeks of the training were designed to cover a wide array of content

essential to the service and populations served at Dyersburg State Community College. The topics covered were consistent with a daily theme and included *Registration, Academic Program Spotlight, Literature Review, Student Services, Advising Transfer Students, and Advising Special Populations*. Ben requested faculty advisor support with three initiatives for the upcoming academic year: an online advising tutorial, training for new faculty advisors, and early intervention strategies to improve student persistence. Groups were formed the first day and given 15 minutes each day to prepare for a presentation at the end of the second week. Each group was asked to address all three topics in their presentations and submit a word document highlighting the points discussed. An academic advising consultant was invited to campus the third week to educate trainees on educational psychology theories and how those theories apply to academic advising. Trainees participated in activities designed for self exploration and applications for advising in the areas of perceptions, stressors, communication, organization, and advising strategies. Faculty advisors concluded the extensive training by creating an individual action plan and an institution plan for the upcoming academic year. For more information, please contact Ben at littlepage@dsc.edu.

2011 NACADA Leadership Election Information

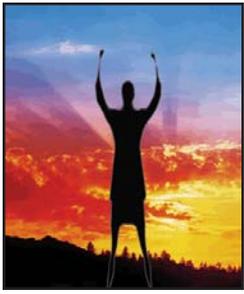
The next NACADA Leadership election will be held in February 2011. For a complete list of NACADA leadership opportunities available in this election, visit the NACADA Web site at www.nacada.ksu.edu/Election/index.htm. A direct link to this election information is also available on the NACADA home page.

Nominations for the various positions can be submitted electronically using the online form available at the Web site above. Other versions of this document are also available at this site and can be faxed or mailed to the NACADA Executive Office. In addition, nomination forms will be available in the NACADA display booth in the Exhibits area at the Annual Conference in Orlando in October as well as in the back of the printed conference program. These forms can be submitted while at the conference or faxed/mailed afterwards. The deadline for submitting nominations to the Executive Office for the 2011 elections is **Friday, October 29, 2010**.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in the governance of the Association, you are encouraged to submit a nomination to be considered for a position. In addition, if you know someone who you believe would be a good candidate, please submit his or her name via the nomination form, and staff at NACADA Executive Office will follow up to determine if he or she is interested and meets the eligibility criteria. Leadership position overviews, including eligibility requirements, and general election information, are provided on the NACADA Web site at the URL above. If you would like to inquire about your eligibility or that of a colleague for a particular position prior to submitting a nomination, please contact the Executive Office.

Each candidate accepting a nomination will be required to complete a short personal biography form online, detailing past NACADA involvement, specific accomplishments, and other relevant support of advising as well as respond to specific questions as part of a platform statement. Each candidate is also asked to submit a photograph that will be posted on her/his platform Web page. Based on nomination acceptances received, the NACADA Nominating Committee may solicit additional nominees to ensure at least two candidates for each position. The final slate of candidates will be available in late fall 2010 and posted to the election web page noted above. The elections will be conducted online in February 2011 and newly elected leaders will take office in October 2011 after the annual conference in Denver.

Watch the monthly *Member Highlights* for more information about these elections. If you have questions, contact the NACADA Executive Office at nacada@ksu.edu or (785) 532-5717.



2010-12 NACADA Emerging Leaders Class Announced

The Diversity Committee developed the **NACADA Emerging Leaders Program** to encourage members from diverse backgrounds to get involved in leadership opportunities within the organization, outfit participants with the skills and tools necessary to pursue elected and appointed leadership positions, increase the number of leaders from diverse groups, and encourage and assist members of underrepresented populations to attend State, Regional, or National Conferences.

The 2008-2010 Emerging Leaders and Mentors, who began work at the 2008 Annual Conference in Chicago, have been diligently pursuing their goals over the past two years and look forward to receiving their Certificates of Completion at this year's Conference in Orlando, where they will be recognized at the Awards Ceremony.

2008-2010 Emerging Leader **Susan Anderson** (University of St Thomas) says, "Prior to being an Emerging Leader, I knew NACADA was a strong and supportive organization and that I had access to national leaders in our profession. When attending conferences, multiple invitations were extended to become involved in NACADA in various ways. The ELP program shifted those 'invitations' to 'expectations' for me, in every good way. As advisors, we know how important it is to help students articulate specific goals, support them throughout the process, hold them accountable when necessary, etc. The ELP created this same kind of 'optimal mismatch' of challenge and support for me, that allowed me to learn, develop, and grow within the advising profession."

NACADA President **Jayne Drake** (Temple University), who has mentored an Emerging Leader in both the 2007-2009 and 2008-2010 classes, says, "Over the past several years, I have had the extraordinary good fortune of working with two 'leaders in training.' This experience has been life altering for me in the sense that I have had the opportunity to meet a number of truly wise and talented people whose commitment to the profession, to their own professional development, and to each other is a lesson in humility and dedication. Some value added to becoming an ELP mentor: from these two relationship-building / mentoring experiences, I have made two dear friends for life. Please join the ELP, if not for yourself, then for the future of the Association."

Emerging Leaders Program Advisory Board Chair **Nathan Vickers** (University of Texas-Austin) is pleased to announce the 2010-2012 NACADA Emerging Leaders and Mentors.

Emerging Leaders

Kristen Campbell (Utah Valley University)
Joy Cox (Indiana University Southeast)
Yvonne Halden (University of Manitoba -Canada)
Bob Hurt (California State Polytechnic University-Pomona)
Kathy Mullins (Front Range Community College)
Tamra Ortgies Young (Georgia Perimeter College)
Leah Panganiban (University of Washington)
Cynthia Pascal (Art Institute of Washington)
Wanda Reyes-Dawes (Manchester Community College)
Felicia Toliver (Gateway Community and Technical College)

Mentors

LaDonna Bridges (Framingham State College)
Kyle Ellis (University of Mississippi)
Tom Grites (Richard Stockton College of New Jersey)
Beth Higgins (University of Southern Maine)
Pat Mason-Browne (The University of Iowa)
Laura Mooney (Florida Atlantic University)
Marion Schwartz (Pennsylvania State University)
Casey Self (Arizona State University)
Gail Stepina (University of New Hampshire)
Jennifer Varney (Southern New Hampshire University)

New Emerging Leaders and Mentors will meet at the Annual Conference in Orlando to create partnerships and begin development, conversation, and group building. Partners will develop goals pertaining to leadership in NACADA over the next six months and continue their work together over the two-year program.

Visit the Emerging Leaders Program Web site at www.nacada.ksu.edu/Programs/EmergingLeaders/Index.htm for more information.



NACADA Career Services Corner



Dear Career Corner:

I am in my senior year of college and have been employed part-time in the advising office at my university during my past few semesters. I am considering pursuing academic advising as a career, but I have a few questions. What educational background do advisors usually have? What are the most important skills that an advisor needs? Do you have any advice for a peer advisor looking to get into this line of work?

Thanks,

Advisor in the Making

Dear Advisor in the Making,

Your questions are good ones, and we are certainly happy to help you get started. The educational background of academic advisors is often as diverse as the students they serve. Most advisors possess a master's degree or higher. Degrees in fields such as psychology, counseling, social work, sociology and higher education administration are fairly common. However, advisors may possess degrees in many fields. I have known wonderful advisors with degrees in fields as diverse as English, Geography, Business Administration, and Tourism Management. The advising profession has reached a point in its development when degree programs in academic advising are now viable and attractive options to new, and even veteran, professionals in the field. NACADA, in association with Kansas State University, offers both a graduate level certificate and a master's degree in academic advising. For more information, visit the graduate program Web site at www.nacada.ksu.edu/GradPrograms/index.htm.

While a discussion of degrees among advisors will likely yield wide-ranging results, a discussion of skills that all advisors must develop would likely result in more closely related ideas. Of course, communication skills are paramount in a field where people are your business. A good understanding of human development, theories of career development, and the theories and practices of higher education are indeed necessary. These skills can be developed through coursework, internships, and other experiences in numerous types of academic programs. But, to be honest, one important characteristic will determine your level of interest and effectiveness in advising, even above and beyond other important factors such as degrees and training. Do you have the desire to help others, to be the person who provides a beacon of hope and a pillar of support to students in their college careers? If the answer is affirmative, then you're on the right track in pursuing advising. Of course, your colleagues and friends at NACADA will be here for you every step of the way.

Best of Luck,

Alison Hoff

Academic Advisor
NACADA Member Career Services Committee Chair
Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne

Bill Elliott

Academic Advisor
NACADA Member Career Services Committee Member
Harford Community College

Commission & Interest Group Updates

NACADA members can view updates and related information on the individual Commission or Interest Group home pages. Announcements, content-related resources, meetings and other conference events, leadership contact information, listserv subscription instructions, and other items of interest are posted on these Web pages.

You are encouraged to become more involved with the Commissions and Interest Groups by participating in events and activities or volunteering to serve on a committee. Visit the links below for more information on specific units and contact information for the Chairs of those units in which you have a special interest.

Commissions:

www.nacada.ksu.edu/Commissions/index.htm

Interest Groups:

www.nacada.ksu.edu/InterestGroups/index.htm

Bookmark your preferred Commissions and/or Interest Groups and check back throughout the year for updates and new developments!

2010 Service to Commission Awards

Congratulations to the 2010 **NACADA Service to Commission Award** recipients. These award recipients will be formally honored during the respective annual Commission meetings held during the NACADA Annual Conference in Orlando this fall. The recipients this year include:

Pat Folsom	Advisor Training & Development Commission University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa
Laurie Harrison	Advising Adult Learners Commission Saint Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa

The Service to Commission Award is presented to an individual who has provided outstanding service, leadership, and commitment to a particular commission. For more information on the guidelines for the Service to Commission Awards, visit www.nacada.ksu.edu/Programs/Awards/CService.htm.

Peer Advising & Mentoring Commission

Cindy Fruhwirth, Chair



The Commission has been very active this year. Over the summer, we worked to add information about developing a peer advising or mentoring program, “generic” training materials, evaluation/assessment tools, and research to our Web page. This is an on-going project and will continue to grow over time. If you have ideas or materials you would like to contribute, please contact me! The interest in peer advising/mentoring continues to grow as is evidenced by the fact that we had double the number of proposals for the NACADA Annual Conference from last year and two members are writing articles for future editions of *Academic Advising Today*.

Our Commission is having an impact all over the globe – literally! I received an email from a new staff member at Zayed University, Dubai, who was seeking information to implement a new peer advising program. I think you’ll enjoy his response to my follow-up as much as I did:

“What can I say . . . I can call it speechless. Thank you so so much. This is much more than I had expected. Really I’m half Irish and I am speechless 8-)))))”

Your generosity with materials and ideas, not to mention directing me in the right direction is beyond words.

Thank you so much...sincerely 8-))” ~ David K.

I hope you will join us at the annual Commission meeting during the Annual Conference in October. We have a panel of members who were peer advisors/mentors themselves when they were still students. They will be addressing what they wish they would have been trained on more thoroughly, what was challenging and rewarding about their peer role, what could have been done to better support them, and what they have taken from those past experiences into their present role.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this Commission (even if you simply answered a member’s question on the listserv)!

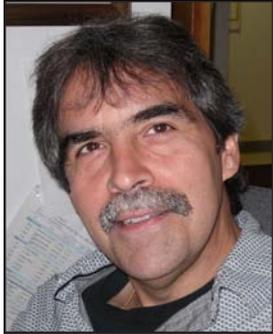
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Commission & Interest Group Updates

Two-Year College Commission

Tim Kirkner, Chair



I hope that many of you are planning on attending the Annual Conference in Orlando, and our Commission has some exciting sessions that I'm sure you won't want to miss! Our commission meeting will be on October 4th at 11:15, and I promise we will get you out in time for lunch! Our hot topics session is on the last day, but I guarantee you will want to

stick around for what promises to be a fantastic session at 10:30 a.m.

Involvement is the key to getting your ideas and concerns heard. I urge everyone to get involved in NACADA. If you don't know what is expected, come to the *How to Get Involved* session on October 5th at 11:30. I am one of the panel members and will be happy to explore the possibilities with you. With that said, we are going to be soliciting nominations for my successor later this year.

Lastly, please keep posting to the listserv, and if you have not joined our Commission page on *Facebook*, please do so soon.

Tim Kirkner

Professor and Counselor
Montgomery College

TIM.KIRKNER@MONTGOMERYCOLLEGE.EDU

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Advising Non-Traditional Students . . . *continued from page 1*

suggestions for creatively meeting the needs of this growing student group.

Creative ways to meet the needs of non-traditional students

- **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.

Advisors working with non-traditional students must respect individual differences. The most successful advisors take time to learn each student's story, identify the student's strengths and challenges in this new environment, and respectfully and effectively link these students to the resources that will best suit their individual needs.

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That's a Wrap. Onward to Orlando. *continued from page 2*

we hope you will join us for this presentation and for all of the exciting Webcasts to follow in 2010-11.

We are also bringing NACADA near you in another important way. One of the most satisfying projects for me personally this year has been working with the members of the Association's Video Advisory Board and some very impressive and talented people at Temple University to produce Volume II of NACADA's highly successful *Scenes for Learning and Reflection*, the professional development DVD that was launched at the 2008 Annual Conference in Chicago. Because of your extraordinarily positive response, the Board of Directors invited Temple to produce Volume II, which is being introduced at our Orlando conference in just a few weeks. As with Volume I, Volume II is a compilation of ten advising vignettes. These scenes were suggested by members of NACADA's Commissions and Interest Groups, and a Video Advisory Board took those ideas, fleshed them out, and shaped the scenes in this DVD. It was filmed in High Definition at Temple using real students, real advisors, and advising administrators in "typical" advising settings, with the filming and editing conducted entirely by undergraduate students in the department of Broadcasting, Television, and Mass Media. Among the scenes included in Volume II are peer advising, the returning veteran, advising the high achieving student, advising the probationary student, and group advising. Following each scene are questions designed to stimulate lively conversation about the issues raised in the scene and how those issues are relevant to advising professionals everywhere. We fully expect that Volume II will be used on campuses in the same way that Volume I is used: namely, for advisor and faculty retreats, in workshops, and in other professional development settings. In fact, **Kathy Davis** (Missouri State University), **Chris Klefeker** (Miami University-Hamilton Campus), and I are hosting a pre-conference workshop in Orlando on the topic of best practices in advisor training and development that will include a deep sneak peek at these new advising vignettes as well as the new monograph on this topic. We will offer ideas about the many ways you might use these scenes to meet the needs of your own audiences, and even model an advising workshop that includes use of the DVD.

The third major initiative I would like to draw your attention to is NACADA's investment in what is called a hosted association management software system that will bring us technologically up to date in a number of important areas by providing efficiencies in data management in the background and member services in the foreground. It gives us Web-enabled options previously unavailable to us. Soon the NACADA Web site will, for example, provide links for us to update our membership information; it will provide a history of our transactions (event registrations for example) within the Association; it will give us the capability to print out our own receipts and invoices; it will allow us to register on line for virtually any NACADA event; it has a shop-on-line feature, and it even offers a virtual social networking system. Major kudos and wishes for a good night's sleep to all at the Executive Office involved in this new system.

It has been a very busy and productive year for NACADA. I hope my message to you signals that NACADA is and will continue to be a vibrant organization that brings together the experience, wisdom, and commitment of the membership in service to our students and to all of our colleagues around the world. It is from you that the Association takes its strength. It is because of you that we continue to work hard to meet your needs; it is because of your commitment to your own professional development and to the needs of your students that we continually strive to earn our title as the Global Community for Academic Advising.

It has been my sincere honor and pleasure to serve as your President this year and to give back to an organization that has given me so much. I would like to extend my thanks to our Board of Directors, whose strategic goals and vision continue to shape our present and future. Of course, the way the Board's good work translates into reality is through the commitment and dedication of an amazing staff in the Association's Executive Office. These are the folks who work the pulleys and levers, ring the bells, and blow the whistles. My deep and abiding gratitude to the Board and Executive Office for all they do in support of the membership.

What a great treat it has been to take this ride with both **Kathy Stockwell**, our amazing Vice President, soon to be President, and **Charlie Nutt**, our front man, our cheerleader, our seer, our redoubtable Executive Director, who is brilliantly stewarding NACADA into our wide open future. The best is yet to come.

Jayne Drake, President

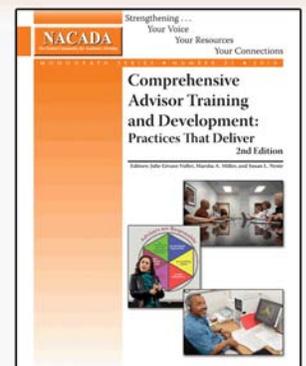
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JAYNE.DRAKE@TEMPLE.EDU

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A Year Filled with Opportunities . . . *continued from page 3*

- We expanded the number of NACADA scholarships for participants attending the NACADA Academic Advising Summer Institutes, Academic Advising Administrators' Institute, and Assessment of Academic Advising Institute.
- The Kansas State University online Graduate Certificate and Masters in Advising degree program, in which NACADA has been involved from their inception, continue to grow and expand each semester. The first full-time faculty member within the program was hired for this fall semester.

One may ask why, in these tough financial times, have NACADA's programs and publications grown and expanded during the past year? I feel strongly that it is because institutions are very carefully evaluating professional development opportunities and supporting only the best with their limited resources; many institutions have determined that NACADA provides the highest quality in professional development events and publications.

I look forward to seeing you all in Orlando in October – our registration numbers indicate that we may hit another landmark number of participants for our Annual Conference. See you in Orlando!

Charlie Nutt, Executive Director
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Raising the Bar: Why is Study . . . *continued from page 4*

are expected to effectively navigate new societal structures, meet different academic expectations, and overcome personal trials. Higher Education in the U.S. has, for the most part, a well oiled machine for guiding students through this transition period, and academic advisors have a multitude of available resources to lead students in the right direction.

Studying abroad requires students to further expand the adaptation skills that helped them thrive as new college students. Studying abroad is a vital experience that adds value to a student's life. Simply put, it raises the bar. Studying abroad is like comparing an undergraduate education to a graduate education; both have value but graduate school takes education to a higher level. With studying abroad, the adaptation lessons are more difficult and the hurdles are much higher. Study abroad students will likely fail many times before they learn to adapt to a new culture and a new educational system. However, these failures ultimately transform students into well-adjusted, open-minded, and confident individuals.

We live in a world where college graduates can expect to change their careers many times during their life. The consistency of the past no longer exists. The ability to successfully adapt is no longer a useful skill; it is a necessary one. As academic advisors, it is our obligation to teach students the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. Studying abroad is not simply an extra tool in a teaching kit that contains resources such as minor brochures, information sessions, writing workshops, and scholarship forms. Studying abroad is a core course in adaptability; it must become one of our top priorities when advising students.

Ian B. Keil
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- Scene 10: Student discloses depression

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www.nacada.ksu.edu/Videos/index.htm

Using Emerging Technologies . . . *continued from page 6*

I hope that this brief introduction to using new technologies in educationally relevant ways inspires us to be curious about how we can leverage these technologies for student good. In the same ways that we push ourselves to develop our professional advising skills, we need to push ourselves to explore fresh ways to reach students through newer virtual formats. I look forward to continuing the conversation in a few weeks in Orlando.

I ended up writing this article entirely on an iPad. Here is what I learned: While the iPad provided a good amount of screen real estate, it is difficult to view large portions of the document and to toggle between multiple documents. The keyboard is a bit cramped and is incredibly sensitive to the touch, making typos common. There is no keyboard feedback (the clicks and resistance provided by a traditional keyboard), and it is difficult to type if you are someone who doesn't typically look at the keyboard while typing. I suspect that as tablet devices become more popular, we'll all become more comfortable typing on virtual keyboards the same way that we have become comfortable participating in virtual social spaces. Until then, I'll stick to my physical keyboard for writing projects longer than a paragraph.

Rey Junco

Associate Professor
Director of Disability Services
Department of Academic Development and Counseling
Lock Haven University

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Advising Administration at a Time . . . *continued from page 7*

is believed that such a move will help Angelo State University increase enrollment and retention during these fiscally trying times.

Conclusion

As we face difficult financial times, it is incumbent that advising administrators enhance campus awareness of the value of academic advising, advocate for resources to meet student needs, and maintain staff morale to provide high quality advising services for our students. Advising administrators must balance the immediate crisis with strategic and sustainable solutions for long term survival and success in challenging times.

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Ni How: What Academic Advisors . . . *continued from page 4*

p. 281). As part of China's efforts to integrate into the global economy, there has been a substantially increased emphasis on education. Yet, college still remains outside the grasp of most Chinese youth who only finish the equivalent of 9th grade. Many students in the rural parts of China do not have the resources to attend high school or college. In addition, all Chinese students must test into high schools; those seeking to attend college must apply to take the *gao kao*, or high test, to qualify for college entrance.

The competitive nature of the *gao kao* exam causes teachers and parents to place considerable pressure on the students; psychological problems and suicide are not uncommon amongst school children (Davey, Lian & Higgins, 2007, p. 385). Prior to the exam, students select their top three universities, and sometimes majors at these universities. An above average *gao kao* score will often allow students to attend one of their top choices; students who place below average can try to apply to another, usually less prestigious, university, or study and take the exam again the following year.

Once admitted into a Chinese university, students enter a cohort system where they take the same courses with the same group of classmates until they reach degree completion. Very rarely do students in China change majors, as they are tied to their cohort and their exam score. Thus there is no academic advising as we know it in China.

Given the fundamental differences between the educational systems, students from China often experience many issues when they arrive to attend U.S. or Canadian institutions. One common issue is that students may not know what to ask academic advisors. Another issue is that advisors may not know if students understood what was discussed during advising meetings. International students may leave an advising session discouraged when questions go unanswered. Advisors likewise can be frustrated when they later discover that students did not fully understand what was conveyed in a session.

Edwards and Ran (2006), as quoted in Davey, Lian, and Higgins, have argued that, "problems commonly faced by Chinese students in overseas universities—such as communication difficulties, weak social skills, and tendency to conform with groups of students from the same country—may be partly attributed to the types of skills developed in preparation of the university entrance exam" (p. 386). Whereas the student discussed above told his advisor he did not understand, it is more common that Chinese students nod or remain quiet to show respect. Abel (2002) also noted that "most international students are accustomed to listening and learning rather than speaking in class" (p. 16). This especially makes sense given that students in China are educated through "a banking system" where teachers provide the answers and students are receptacles that retain the information.

Advising international students from China is a very complex process given the educational and cultural differences and often language barriers. Diane Oliver (1999) suggested that "advisors can increase their effectiveness by taking a more

holistic view of international students' needs" (p. 22). Although this article specifically addresses Chinese international students, the lessons learned here can be generalized to all international student groups. When we learn more about individual international education systems, accept cultural differences, and learn basic greetings in the native languages of our students, we can better serve all of our international students. How might our interactions with an international student from China improve when we start a session by saying *ni how*?

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Visa Status and Its Effect on . . . *continued from page 5*

For many international students, maintaining the required full-time status becomes more difficult than originally thought. With traditional students, a variety of academic options may be available, depending on institutional policies. For instance, a student might be able to take a course as an auditor or withdraw from a course at a certain point in the semester if they are doing poorly. For international students, choosing one of these options could affect their visa status and result in an immigration violation. Once students have violated their visa status, they are considered to be in the U.S. illegally. Students who are deemed to be in the U.S. illegally for 180 days cannot return to the U.S. for at least three years. If they remain in illegal status for one year or more, the bar for reentry is ten years (Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, 1996). International students facing poor grades in a subject can be caught between a rock and a hard place as they decide between accepting the poor grade and violating their visa status.

If an undergraduate international student is enrolled in only 12-14 credits and wishes to change to an auditor or withdraw from a course (dropping them below 12 credits), he would be in violation of his immigration status. There are some circumstances, though, in which a student might be able to drop below the 12 credits, such as academic difficulty, medical or psychological conditions, or needing fewer than 12 credits to finish a degree. Academic difficulties typically include initial difficulty with the English language, initial difficulty with reading requirements, difficulty adjusting to the American educational system or improper course level placement (Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952). In these situations, students should connect with the Designated School Official [the person authorized to maintain the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)] on campus who certifies their visa status, as additional paperwork would need to be completed for their files.

Notice that there is no category of financial circumstances in which a student might be able to drop below the 12-credit limit. International students are not eligible for any federal financial aid. In fact, each student must provide proof of sufficient funds available for self-support throughout their proposed course of study when applying for their visa at their local consulate (Students and Exchange Visitors). In addition, universities will likely require the student to submit a letter or form that lists all sources of funding and when the funding will be available. The letter or form will identify a sponsor who provides documentation of financial support. Despite this, many international students are surprised to find that their parent or sponsor cannot or will not pay once they have arrived. While a student who enters the country on an F-1 visa is eligible to work on campus up to 20 hours per week beginning in the first year, the position cannot be funded through federal work-study funds, limiting positions that are available (Financial Aid For Undergraduate Services).

In order to encourage academic success, it is important for all advisors who meet with international students to fully understand the unique rules and regulations facing this

population. Advising offices might want to consider providing students with copies of the federal regulations if they are not provided elsewhere on campus. It is vital to encourage international students to take an appropriate number of credits and to help them understand the importance of a balanced schedule. International students should fully understand their visa status and what a course of full-time study means at the undergraduate level in the United States. Resources providing training about visas and immigration status are available to both students and professionals in a variety of places online. Check out the **NACADA ESL/International Student Advising Commission** for additional resources and topics affecting international students at www.nacada.ksu.edu/commissions/c26/index.htm.

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The Importance of Face-to-Face . . . *continued from page 5*

The university developed electronic student management systems, students could request changes to their programmes of study online; we responded online, cutting out the 'inconvenience' of face-to-face meetings. Staff and students thought that this was wonderful, and in many respects it was. However, when we found that students were dropping out during their first year, I was asked by the Dean to "find out why and do something about it"!

I talked with first years and found that some were experiencing problems, mostly non-academic, but didn't know who to approach for help. They would let things deteriorate and drop out of university because they could not cope any longer. I realised that in adopting online student management, which is amazingly efficient and a wonderfully useful tool, we had taken the 'Personal' out of Personal Tutoring. What to do?

If students do not work with their tutor in good times, they are hardly likely to seek our help when things get tough. Students will not go to a stranger – especially a member of faculty – when their world is collapsing. We needed to change our model of Personal Tutoring from reactive to proactive.

In September 2005, I set up PASS, our Personal and Academic Support System, in my academic school. Each PASS tutor runs a programme of small group tutorials throughout the first year with our tutees. Eight tutees are allocated to each tutor strictly within their discipline, giving cohort identity among that tutor's students and building empathy between tutor and students. Meetings have a purpose: we knew that students would benefit from structured study skills training, so tutorials have a programme covering discipline-based academic study skills. This helps combat information overload that happens at the start of the year by drip-feeding information to students at the time when it is relevant.

I have written tutorial materials, thus minimal staff preparation is required and all students receive the same level of academic support. Group-work teaches cooperation between students and helps build cohort identity and peer support among students within the discipline. Face-to-face meetings build student confidence with staff and provide tutees with a feeling of belonging in the academic community. Through fortnightly tutorials, students get to know one faculty member well, so they have somebody to contact if they experience difficulties that interrupt their studies.

When students approach tutors with non-academic issues that extend beyond faculty comfort levels, they can refer tutees to me; I meet students and listen to their stories. Together we move forward; this often involves referral for professional help e.g., counselling, financial aid, or accommodation. I have a hot-line to the Director of Student Services, who supports me in finding rapid assistance for students in need. As a senior faculty member, I am able to make academic decisions on behalf of the student and clear these with my colleagues. Having this academic influence is crucial.

I no longer research in biochemistry; instead I use my people-skills to develop holistic support for students. That is where I believe I can make a difference in students' lives. After all, students who face personal problems have a difficult time focusing on their studies and progress at university.

Over the past four years, I have developed other branches of PASS to provide holistic support for all our students. Our first year retention has improved from 83% in 2004 to 93% in 2009, and the Dean has attributed this to our student support: PASS.

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