

Analysis of Professional Development Survey by Stephanie Gillin

I am dismayed by the low response rate, and I think we need to consider why only 22% of advisors completed the survey. Was two weeks too short of a time period for them to complete it? Perhaps it was offered during a registration period and they were too busy to complete it? Or lack of interest, which would be a serious problem indeed.

For those who did respond, we appear to be fulfilling their expectations, but that doesn't necessarily mean that their expectations are high. Networking is by far most important to respondents, not surprisingly. Presenting sessions is not a widespread priority which concerns me because this is the population that should be presenting, mentoring, and teaching. Funding is a major issue. Perhaps we should be doing a better job of promoting all of the ways that NACADA helps with conference funding – maybe a link on the website. For those who cannot attend, one respondent suggested we offer video-conferencing or video packages of highly rated presentations or keynote speakers.

I was disappointed to find that more respondents are not leaving conferences feeling refreshed or validated in their professions. They also do not leave feeling more aware of professional growth opportunities we are offering.

However, a significant number report feeling better prepared for their jobs and ready to apply new techniques/ideas.

Many comment they are disappointed and discouraged that sessions are repeated year after year and it is rare to find new and cutting-edge programming. A good representative comment: "The conferences are excellent, but after attending for so many years, I wasn't learning anything new and I began to find the conference topics redundant. I still found it refreshing to be among folks who value advising, but that in and of itself was not enough to get me to go for awhile. I plan to attend again now that it has been awhile (to see if anything has changed)." Many wrote that we seem to be repeating the same sessions from year to year, so it would be worthwhile exercise to go through the programs from past years and see if there are patterns.

As far as applying and sharing the knowledge they gain from the conferences, they do not share much with colleagues, though they are engaged in training and mentoring new advisors. They sometimes share information with upper administration and often share with their supervisors upon their return, but that may be because they are required to after being sent to a conference, and sharing information from conferences, with administration or colleagues, is not leading to the implementation of plans for improving advising in their offices. **Overall, they do not feel capable of influencing others that advising is important, which is a key issue I believe we need to address.** Several have requested sessions on dealing with the politics of higher education and strategies to influence supervisors and upper administration. Some suggest we get buy-in from higher administration by inviting them to participate in our conferences, or perhaps sponsor an institute targeting senior leadership be scheduled. One respondent requests "more opportunity for upper-level administrators to discuss issues at the policy level. Many of the sessions seem to focus on entry-level or "show and tell" type sessions." There are also requests for career guidance – how to move up the career ladder and leadership skills. Another suggested

that we schedule popular presentations more than once during a conference to prevent lack of handout/materials and room overcrowding, which I think is an excellent suggestion.

There are repeated requests for sessions for senior advisors and even a request for sessions restricted to advisors by years of experience. Topics suggested:

- Supervision of advisors
- Advising philosophies
- Changes in the profession
- Organizational change
- How to handle multiple assignments, advising being one of them
- Sessions that address actual practices -- i.e. here's what we do, here's what works, here's what didn't, this is what prompted us to implement this, etc

A common format request is round-table discussions, as opposed to presentations.

I think we need to put a call out to our colleagues and ask them to present on these specific topics. That said, I missed the deadline for a presentation proposal this year. My plan was to present on an advising ladder and level system we are working on implementing at Temple, and I had asked our Executive Director of Finance to come with me. If you feel that you can fit us in, let me know (though we would have to present on Thursday the 18th or do a pre-conference session).

Aside from the issues mentioned in my previous paragraphs, there continues to be a general feeling that we are not addressing the following student populations:

- Community college
- Non-traditional
- Adult learners
- Graduate
- Professional students

Maybe we get these commissions involved with finding presenters on these subjects.

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