

## ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

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Throughout this book, readers have been reflecting on how each approach to advising relates to their own practice, where it may be useful, and how it might be adapted. At this point, each reader can draw on those reflections to address some more general questions: In my role as an advisor, what do I aspire to achieve? What is my view about the overall purpose of advising? What will advising look like in ten years? In what kind of advising profession would I like to participate in the future? How would I change the ways advising is done and organized?

In this chapter I suggest the direction for advising. I encourage readers to consider whether they are attracted to this vision of the future or whether they prefer a different direction for the profession.

### A Fable

Tracy opened her laptop in her residence hall to register for her final semester. She had not seen her advisor because she did not have an advisor—no one at Future U did. Instead, being a conscientious student, Tracy opened the Ad-Vy-Zor software module attached to the registration site and ran her degree audit for the next-to-last time to verify the classes she needed. Identifying the courses, Tracy navigated to the registration page and had a rude awakening: One of the courses she needed in her major was not offered!

This had happened before, but not so close to graduation. Tracy knew to go back to Ad-Vy-Zor and click on the “course unavailable” area. She typed in the course ID and clicked on “recommend substitute.” The system offered only one option. A veteran user of the system, she knew that a recommended substitute was not necessarily an *approved* substitute. So she navigated to still another module and clicked “request substitution” and supplied the necessary information. (Most of the fields were prefilled because the module accessed her open registration page and degree audit.)

At this point, Ad-Vy-Zor surveyed a highly confidential database of algorithms regarding circumstances under which various substitutions were acceptable. These rules resulted from a collaboration between information technology personnel who had trained on the Ad-Vy-Zor system and department faculty members and were approved by respective deans and the curriculum committee. The rules take into

account a student's proximity to graduation: A substitution that would not be permitted for a junior might be allowed for a senior. In Tracy's case, the verdict was *Yes*. Offered this outcome, she happily clicked "accept" and went back to the registration screen to key in the new course. Meanwhile the degree audit module updated her record to show that this course met the intended graduation requirement and subsequently all the remaining red fields in her audit turned black. Tracy exited the system and headed off to the cafeteria for lunch. The whole process had taken 10 minutes.

This fable represents one possible future for advising, but not the only one. What, if anything, is wrong with this scenario? Tracy did not need to interact with a human being to meet her needs. Is that a problem? Ad-Vy-Zor is likely as consistent, reliable, and accurate as a human advisor. Certainly Tracy is satisfied. She would be less pleased if she had received a negative response, to which a human advisor could have offered sincere sympathy, a benefit that may not justify the expense of maintaining an advising center. What other advantages, if any, can advocates of human advisors cite?

At Future U, the case for the value added by human advisors was not made effectively. What might the future be like if that case is made, and how might the case be made?

### A Vision, Not a Prediction

In the following depiction, I do not seek to predict the future of advising, but rather describe a possible future worth pursuing. The function of a prediction is to come true, and it is evaluated on that basis. The function of a vision is to motivate, to inspire. In this chapter, I present a cluster of ideas and goals for the advising community to consider. My central claim is that advising can potentially become the most important academic resource in higher education if only the advising community will embrace the ideas and goals set forth here and effectively articulate them to the wider academic world.

In this chapter, I describe an imagined future for advising in which colleges and universities, to take advantage of the benefits of advising, are organized differently from the way they now are ordered. I present the information in sections about

- advisors and students,
- advisors and institutions, and
- advisors and academia.

Through a series of propositions in each section, I describe one aspect of advisors' roles in this imagined world.

### A Note on Sources

The practices described are not factual, so the chapter does not present (and therefore does not document) evidence that they are real. However, the ideas extend from other

works, and readers who find these ideas attractive—or who do not—may wish to peruse some of these sources. In any case, credit is due to some colleagues who have made important contributions to broadening the discourse on advising, including several whose work is represented in this publication.

Hagen (1994), describing Plato's Socrates as an academic advisor, was one of the first to present a paradigm of advising rooted in a humanities discipline. Hemwall and Trachte (1999, 2005) argued that the core purpose of advising is to facilitate learning. They also called attention to the value of focusing students on an institution's overall educational philosophy as represented, for example, in its mission statement. In a previous publication (Lowenstein, 2000), I proposed that advisors enhance learning by helping students understand and articulate the logic of their curricula and furthermore (Lowenstein, 2005, 2011) suggested that this activity gives concrete meaning to the concept of *advising as teaching*.

Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2010) provided a superb context for thinking about the future of advising through a historical account of ideas about the role of advising in higher education (and how the reality has differed from the ideas) as well as an inspiring exhortation for advisors to take their rightful place as academic leaders and thinkers. In this chapter, I suggest one way advisors might advance and communicate their roles in the academy.

## Advisors and Students

Because students are, of course, central to advising, my vision for the future begins with a description of advisors' relationships with advisees. In this scenario, future advising will realize the potential to be the single most important factor in each student's education. The discussions of advisors' future roles in their institutions and in higher education generally are the subsequent, logical extensions of their impact on students.

Each of the statements is at once a description of a possible future for advising and an element of a philosophy of advising that emerges from the account as a whole. The descriptions, although about the future, are rendered in the present tense for stylistic simplicity.

### Advising Is a Locus of Learning, Not a Service

Advising is a locus of learning; it is not a service that directs students to the place where they can learn. Advisors have overcome the view that their work consists of helping students select learning experiences or even of helping them identify the goals of their learning experiences. Instead, they are teachers, and their advising interactions with students consist of teaching and learning. Advisors help students to make a coherent whole out of their entire education in a manner analogous to that in which a classroom instructor helps students make sense of the material in a single course. Students recognize and create linkages and logical relationships between and among

their various courses, comparing and contrasting ways of knowing, understanding how one body of knowledge builds on another, reflecting constantly on how courses and groups of courses contribute to meeting educational goals, even as new experience may change those goals.

Advisors coach and facilitate this learning process, asking their students questions such as those described by Janet Spence and Nora Scobie in chapter 12 on Socratic advising, encouraging them to focus not only on facts and theories but also on intellectual skills and habits of mind, and always returning to an evolving set of learning goals and intentionally focusing on how experiences relate to these objectives. To undertake this process, advisors need a breadth of intellectual background and a set of pedagogical skills identical to those that the best classroom teachers possess, as delineated by Jayne Drake in chapter 2 on advising as teaching.

### Advising Gives Meaning to Education

Learning in the advising setting gives coherence and meaning to students' educations. In the past, students often perceived their curricular requirements as a set of discrete entities, represented by boxes to be checked off of a curricular worksheet in whatever order might be permitted (more recently the boxes appear on a computerized degree audit). Too often advisors (and those who hired and evaluated them) perceived advisors' primary responsibility as helping to ensure that students did not miss any boxes, and regardless of the quality of their performance in this role, they reinforced their advisees' limited understanding and squandered an opportunity to add value to those students' educations.

Today, advisors appreciate that their work also includes helping students develop a much richer understanding of their curricula. Students and advisors spend their time together discussing how the students' learning experiences fit together across a semester and over time. Students understand that there is, after all, a rationale to the requirements they must meet; moreover they can expand on this rationale and take ownership of it by tying it to their own educational goals—and those goals, in turn, become more sophisticated over time as they are informed by new learning. With their advisors' help, students now see their course selections not only as steps toward completing requirements, but as opportunities to reinforce and complement what they have learned and to set the stage for further learning.

Advisors and students realize that an education is more than the sum of its parts. Each individual component not only stands on its own, but grows tentacles as subsequent experiences shed new light on it, illuminating the ways it can interconnect to other components. Not only is learning shaped by the context of the student's past, but the converse holds true as well: Prior learning takes on new meaning when subsequent ideas and information create a new context for it. While students must take responsibility for finding connections, advisors are accountable for facilitating student understanding of them.

### **Advising Is a Year-Round, Nonadministrative Enterprise**

Course selection remains a locus of the advising relationship because the process offers teachable moments about a student's learning progress. However, students and advisors best accomplish goals at times other than the hectic registration period so that they can take a longer and broader view of the ways student classes and experiences fit together. Moreover, students' perspectives on their learning change throughout a semester, so a single visit is unlikely to prove optimally effective.

An unfortunate trend of the late 20th and early 21st centuries involved commoditization of higher education. Students shopped for colleges and universities, which often catered to these potential customers by packaging their product as an attractive purchase. Once they selected a college, students often continued to see themselves as consumers. As a consequence of this perspective, they tended to see everyone (with the *possible* exception of their course professors) at the institution as a service provider. They expected the registrar's web site, the bursar's office, and the cafeteria to provide services that they had already purchased. They also viewed the advisor's job as monitoring their efficient progress toward graduation.

The latest, enlightened view of advising has not completely changed consumerist attitudes throughout the university, but it has affected advisors' view of their roles and students' views as well. Advisors do not see themselves as processors of paperwork (even though, of course, they have record-keeping responsibilities), and they recognize that the experiences that students share with them are anything but routine. Advising involves very little busy work.

### **Advising Is Transformational**

That one might experience positive change by interacting with an administrative office would never have occurred to a student in the past. Now, even if students are not immediately aware of it, advisors aspire to transform students' understanding of their education.

Advisors hope students will finish college with a more complex worldview and a richer sense of what knowledge is, how it fits together and how it changes, than they had when they entered higher education. Advisors see this student evolution as a principal goal of their work. They do not indoctrinate students—whose beliefs are their own—rather, in the Socratic sense, they serve as midwives to the students' delivery of ideas.

### **Advising Socializes Students to Take Responsibility**

For quite some time, most faculty members have seen active learning as absolutely essential for students to master the material in their courses. Constructivism as a pedagogical theory holds that students must construct their knowledge of the course content for themselves; they do not receive that knowledge from others—not the instructor, the textbook, nor any other source.

More recently advisors, too, have come to understand that students must take responsibility for their own direction. This tenet of student obligation involves more than the traditional (and legalistic) proposition found in college catalogs that suggests that, while advisors offer help, students are responsible for knowing and following an institution's policies. Rather, advisors now understand that students' academic task in college involves constructing an overall, uniquely personal understanding of how the world works, the ways by which knowledge is gained and critiqued, the meaning of these understandings in terms of students' own lives, and the fit of students' values into a worldview. No one can create understanding of these aspects of learning for students. However, advisors can help students recognize the learning tasks ahead and repeatedly coach them through various stages of accepting the challenge and monitoring the many twists and turns of the students' changing ideas over time.

### **Advising Helps Students Create Meaning and See Patterns in Their Learning**

Students need to see patterns in their learning. Although difficult for modern educators and students to believe, students did not willingly visit their advisors, and so some in the academy longed for the days when students were required to obtain an advisor's signature to register. Seemingly against their own interests, however, advisors opposed the signature requirement because students saw them as obstacles to overcome rather than as important people who contributed to student achievement. Therefore, in many places the requirement disappeared, (coincidentally or not) institutions developed increasingly effective means for students to track their own progress toward graduation, and gradually the reason for seeing one's advisor became more difficult to identify.

By seeing advisors as people who help them make sense of their learning, today's students understand the rationale for making advising appointments. As a result, they experience powerful conversations with their advisors and find them sources of intellectual excitement comparable to the best "Aha!" moments in the classroom. Seeing how the parts of one's education fit together can be as stimulating as finally understanding why differential calculus makes sense, or what the various phenomena called the *Renaissance* have in common. Tremendously motivating for students, advising converts all of those boxes on the degree audit into a meaningful pattern; in effect it is what makes an education of various seemingly unconnected classes.

## **Advisors and Institutions**

In this section, I explain more concretely how colleges and universities have facilitated the interaction between students and advisors described in the previous section. Such arrangements cannot be implemented without quite a bit of administrative support.

In fact, some may doubt that they can be undertaken at all, and others will wonder at any possible motive for students to enter into the challenging enterprise of advising with all the other demands on their time and energy.

Plato's *Republic* portrays Socrates describing an ideally organized society. One of his interlocutors, Glaucon, expresses doubts about the viability of such a society, and Socrates in a famous passage says a single step is both necessary and sufficient for such a state to evolve: "Cities will have no respite from evil, my dear Glaucon, nor will the human race, I think, unless philosophers rule as kings in the cities, or those whom we now call kings and rulers study philosophy . . ." (Plato, 1974, p. 133). The point, for purposes of the present discussion, is not to start a debate on Plato or to propose that advisors should be philosophers (though many are). Here, Plato's suggestion serves as an analogy. Just as he thought a single point of leverage (easy to describe but perhaps difficult to implement) could change society, so the accomplishment of the new role for advising depends largely on a relatively simple set of institutional changes.

### Advising Is Rightfully a Credit-Bearing Activity

To persuade all stakeholders to view advising as a serious learning experience on par with the classroom, educational leaders reasoned that institutions need to award academic credit for it. This effort turned out to be the single lever that made many other changes possible. The importance is partly symbolic but also very practical. By making advising a credit-bearing activity, the academy communicates that students should expect to experience learning in their advising relationship and that advisors are teachers. The move also suggests that advisors bring considerable knowledge and wisdom to the advising encounter and that students should prepare for it as they do for class. Indeed the mandate implies that the advising relationship has intended learning outcomes such that students bear responsibility for achieving results for which they will be graded! More mundanely, but just as importantly, the students understand that advisors assign homework that students are expected to complete.

The various implications of awarding academic credit for advising reflect the characteristics that make real the vision of advising as a locus of learning. Most important, the new status of advising affects student incentives: People value that for which they have paid (or earned) more highly than that which they get for free. Paying tuition for an experience encourages students to seek value in it. Moreover, the prospect of receiving grades for their work encourages students to take it seriously. (Educators are not so idealistic to suppose that the intrinsic value of the experience is sufficient to put it at the top of students' priority lists; that is, if such a motivator does not inspire writing term papers, it will not encourage appreciation for advising either.)

Students do not receive grades or credits just for visiting their advisors and chatting, even about weighty topics such as those involving life goals and learning about

the logic of the curriculum. They must provide concrete evidence of learning. At most institutions students show learning in the context of a course for which they register and complete either every semester or some fixed number of times. Many institutions title this course “Reflective Learning,” although other titles apply. Reflective learning, now common in colleges, referred to as *RL*, may be offered on an independent study basis or in a group format. Content is based on a syllabus, a tool evolving from the advising syllabus, which became prominent in the early 21st century. The syllabus lists learning objectives generally, but not exclusively, related to the integrative function of advising. It also indicates the types of assignments students must complete, which include a variety of readings about the purposes of higher education and related topics and writing assignments that reflect these matters as well as structured meetings (some in group format) with the advisor (who is the course instructor).

As the most substantial product of *RL*, students typically maintain an electronic portfolio to which they add items throughout their years in college. The entries include papers and other assignments appropriate to their studies that illustrate the content of their learning, the patterns it forms, and development over time. The portfolio also includes ongoing reflection on these matters, for which the student primarily earns the grade for each successive *RL* course. The electronic format allows students to link their reflections to portfolio documents that substantiate their achievements. It also lets them connect topics over time to illustrate altered perspectives or increasingly sophisticated understandings.

Students’ *RL* grades are not earned based on the quantity of learning in a major or general education course. Rather, the *RL* grade rewards astuteness of reflection on learning across the curriculum and success in constructing connections among learning experiences. It also rewards the cogency with which students document their reflections on their educational progress by citing appropriate papers and other exhibits included in the portfolio.

Colleges and universities do not offer *RL* grades in addition to the credits that they already provide for undergraduate degrees. Rather, they judge *RL* as sufficiently important in enhancing learning throughout the students’ curricula, making their entire education more effective (including strengthening their ability to make use of the content material from their other courses), that they reduce the number of other required degree credits to ensure that students gain the most from *RL*.

### **Advisors Are Faculty Members**

If students earn credits toward graduation for their *RL* courses and pay tuition, then those who teach the courses should earn teaching credit for them as well, and just as institutions consider the credits a worthwhile trade-off for students in meeting degree requirements, they value the advisors’ work in *RL* and treat it as in-load teaching rather than a discretionary extra.

Many institutions that originated this practice immediately encountered a puzzle: Most of their advisors were faculty members with formally defined teaching loads,



whether by institutional tradition or union contract, but other advisors were full-time staff who did not otherwise teach, and the teaching load had no meaning in their jobs. That is, they could not teach RL instead of teaching something else.

Initially universities dealt with this problem in ad hoc ways that no one considered really satisfying, but gradually, over a period of years, a solution emerged that revolutionized the institutional role of advisors. Many universities concluded that if advising is teaching (which they had claimed to believe for decades), and if the RL classes offer value, full-time advisors taught just as much as traditional faculty had taught such that the distinction between these two categories of people proved artificial. So the leadership collapsed the distinction altogether and began classifying everyone who taught RL the same—as faculty. Only the distinction between advisors who solely taught in RL and those who teach some RL classes as well as in a specific departmental discipline, such as chemistry, finance, or anthropology, remained.

Everyone understood from the start, however, that merely decreeing the equality of a status does not make it universally appreciated. For the full-time RL teachers truly to be peers of the other faculty, they must hold similar credentials, which is the reason the change in advisor status took a number of years to accomplish. Initially universities instituted large-scale graduate programs to enhance the academic background of advisors while faculty members complemented their terminal disciplinary degrees with in-service programs that helped them explore ways to translate their teaching skills into the RL setting. Ultimately, however, many of the graduate programs that had long prepared teachers in higher education adapted to produce well-prepared professionals for the RL program, and most hired to teach and advise now have similar educational attainments.

Of course, education is not enough: Just as faculty members have traditionally engaged in productive scholarship throughout their careers, full-time advisors now face a similar expectation. They carry out empirical studies of the effectiveness of various teaching and advising techniques and also write about their discoveries in learning gained by working with students.

Not all institutions have adopted the RL model and not all faculty members who can participate choose to do so. Moreover, not all full-time advisors have embraced the possibilities, preferring to keep their traditional role.

In the remainder of this chapter, the word *advisors* continues to appear as the designation for those instructors who teach mostly in RL-type settings. Although the distinction reflects only the number of hours devoted to each type of teaching, *advisors* may be contrasted with *faculty members* who teach mostly non-RL courses.

### **Advising and Assessment Are Inextricably Linked**

The mandate that grew up in the late 20th century that colleges and universities assess student learning and adjust curricula or pedagogies to address any disappointing results remains in force. However, the new role that advising plays in higher education has added at least three new dimensions to assessment.

First, students' portfolios provide superb raw material for assessment. Students know the learning goals they are attempting to reach, and they have intentionally chosen the papers and other items in their portfolios precisely to illustrate their progress toward those goals. Their written reflections describing the reasons for selected items, as well as the items themselves, illustrate the portfolios' usefulness for assessment. Faculty members in degree programs or external stakeholders, such as accreditation teams or employers, find useful evidence here.

Second, the best assessments for advising are more clear than in the past. Advisors define the learning objectives of their work with students—specifically in their RL classes—and the concrete work that students produce provides the best evidence of the amount and applicability of their learning. No longer must evaluators resort to indirect measures of the effectiveness of advising, such as inputs rather than outcomes or compiled satisfaction surveys. (The latter are not useless but they are far from the best available measures of learning.)

When looking at these two aspects of assessment together, one sees the interesting consequence that the assessments of curricular learning and the assessment of learning in the advising setting have converged. The same evidence supports both, and indeed the questions are the same as well.

Finally, students have become active partners with the faculty in the assessment enterprise. Their understanding of learning objectives and of how to marshal evidence of their achievements aligns with the knowledge that the faculty needs for assessment. When department leaders wish to assess learning goals for graduates or university administrators seek a random selection of students to participate in some nationwide test of essential intellectual skills, students come forward to volunteer because they are just as eager as the faculty to learn from the results and to write about their achievements in their portfolios.

### **Advisors Are Campus Thought Leaders**

At most institutions, select people are seen as particularly adept at articulating the institution's mission and at thinking through implications for issues of curriculum and strategy. These individuals likely head task forces to reconfigure general education or serve as key participants in the institutional self-study for regional accreditation. When they rise to speak at faculty senate meetings, others actually listen. They are likely to have written and spoken on their ideas about education for both internal and external audiences, and other institutions have invited them as speakers, evaluators, or consultants.

Historically these thought leaders were employed as discipline-based faculty members, or occasionally as administrators. Now, as advisors have taken a more prominent role in examining learning at their institutions and as they increasingly involve themselves in studying the issues that surround teaching and learning, they too are seen as thought leaders. For example, they play prominent roles on curriculum committees because they have spent more time than other faculty members in study-

ing how students interact with the institutional curriculum as a whole; for the same reason, advisors serve as respected members on assessment committees. When an advisor rises to speak at a faculty senate meeting, others listen.

### **Advisors Expect and Are Expected to Continue Learning**

At most universities, to be an effective teacher one needs to continue learning. In most cases, both the institution and the faculty have understood that the expression of this learning means conducting scholarship in one's discipline. Of course, colleges have always varied in the manifestations of the scholarship expected from the faculty.

Now that advisors have taken on roles increasingly similar to those of traditional faculty members and their institutions understand them to be teachers on par with other faculty members, they face the expectations historically applied to their peers. They are vigorous consumers and producers of the literature on higher education—on curriculum, learning, assessment, and civic engagement as well as the relationships between general education and majors and between learning and the workplace. Their institutions support advisor–scholar work and allocate travel funds, comparable to those given to other faculty members, for them to attend conferences, and they also show that they value these learning efforts by publicizing advisors' achievements and basing promotions partly on accomplishments related to learning.

### **Admissions Brags about Advising Programs**

When recruiting students, admissions personnel show off their fitness centers and computer labs, cite the names of eminent scholars on the faculty, and point out activities available to students. Recently, however, they also boast about the quality of the advising programs. Everyone on campus clearly understands that the success students achieve during and after their enrollment is tied to their advising experience. The students who guide families on campus tours and the student orientation leaders who greet them several months later at registration all brim with enthusiasm about their own experiences with their advisors. The admissions staff add their own voices about advising to the litany of characteristics they like to highlight. Parents, increasingly savvy about the potential impact of advising, have learned to ask questions such as “What kind of reflective learning courses do you offer?” Just as institutions have long sought to enhance their reputations by citing Pulitzer Prize winners or Fulbright scholars on their faculty, they now add prominent advisors to the list as well.

## **Advisors and Academia**

As institutional leaders have recognized and acted upon advisors' importance to student learning, the world of academia as a whole has also come to value advisors in new ways.

### **Advising Gains High Status as a Career**

As befits their co-equal role, advisors enjoy the same career-path opportunities that institutions provide for traditional faculty members, including promotions in rank and tenure. As individuals in the field gain national prominence for their work, especially for their scholarship, they may become attractive targets for recruitment by other institutions, just as has been the case for well-known scholars in other academic disciplines.

Of course, not everyone aspires to a career in academia. Not everyone enjoys the intellectual life or is sufficiently well equipped for it. Not everyone enjoys regular interactions with students. In addition, many people qualified for academic work can demand higher salaries in other walks of life. None of these workplace realities has changed since the early 21st century.

However, for college students excited by ideas, with talent for intellectually demanding work, and stimulated by the prospect of lighting the intellectual spark in the next generation of students, a career in advising is every bit as attractive as one in traditional teaching.

### **Advising Is Informed by Cutting-Edge Thinking**

Higher education continues to play a vital role in society both for its contributions to national economic, social, and political life and for the benefits it brings to individuals who attend college. Therefore, it is a constant subject of study, analysis, and debate. Governments at all levels, accrediting bodies, journalists, and citizens are among the participants in the ongoing discussion. At colleges and universities, top administrators have traditionally been involved, along with a limited number of faculty members, but more recently, advisors have been among the most avid readers of the literature. The most important writing about higher education deals with the purposes of education, the structures and practices most likely to enhance learning, the curriculum, and assessment. These topics are central to the work of advisors.

On individual campuses, advisors get together on a regular basis to exchange ideas gleaned from the higher education journals they read. Of course, they have plenty of other ways and venues for communicating about these matters.

### **Advising Is Nonpreferentially Informed by Many Disciplines and Paradigms**

At one time, the developmental approach to advising enjoyed a semi-official status as the favored, sanctioned approach. Accordingly, most practitioners and leaders in the field assumed that those from disciplines based on the study of student development, namely the behavioral sciences, would possess the best intellectual background for the field. This supposition led to powerful implications for

- the types of educational preparation that administrators expected in potential advisors;

- the preference (in some quarters, see O'Banion, 1974/1994/2009) for professional advisors with such backgrounds over faculty advisors;
- the research methodology, format, and style book that characterized the first leading advising journal; and
- even the types of questions that advisors chose to consider and investigate.

This last point is immensely important. A paradigm of thought not only preferences some kinds of answers over others, but tends to dictate, without adherents even being aware of it, the kinds of questions that seem appropriate to raise.

No one ever intended that one approach to advising, and its accompanying way of knowing, achieve hegemony over others, but *advising* and *developmental advising*, at one time, were practically synonymous. The only alternative to the developmental approach that anyone could name was a straw man named *prescriptive advising*. More recently, however, two mutually reinforcing trends have changed this picture.

First, people from a much wider range of disciplinary backgrounds have entered advising and achieved positions of leadership. Second, the approaches to advising described in this volume have emerged because advisors trained in diverse disciplines brought their own modes of thinking to their work and to their discourse about their work. Why did they pursue advising and how did their ideas converge?

The answers lie in the changed character of advisors' work. The challenge of engaging with students in the integration of their curricula and reflection on the similarities and differences among modes of knowledge calls for individuals with a specific type of intellectual equipment rather than those within any specific area of knowledge specialization. During their own intellectual upbringing, these future advisors tended to explore disciplines broadly and devoted more energy than their classmates to reflection about the ways the elements of knowledge fit together to support and complement each other.

Now that the new paradigm of advising has been in place for some years, many students are graduating from universities with this kind of experience, but in the early years they were difficult to find. Those with the specific interest and skill suited for advising come from many different areas of concentration at both undergraduate and graduate levels. They have less in common in the topics they studied than in how they studied them: intentionally, reflectively, and with an eye on how subject matter is related to other areas of thought.

As the range of advisors' backgrounds broadened, so too did the modes of thought that informed their work. The result was the rich array of approaches to advising that contributors to this book describe and an advising community accustomed to greeting new approaches and increasingly being receptive to them.

### Advisors Contribute to Nonadvising Conferences and Journals

No one is more intimately involved in intensive thought about learning than advisors. After all, they spend most of their time discussing learning with students and coaching them to think about learning in new ways. So when they think and write about

their work, they think and write about learning. However, learning is equally central to the concerns of classroom faculty and curriculum committee members, assessment officers, deans, provosts, student affairs leaders, and others. So the scholarship that advisors create has become important not only to other advisors but to the wider world of higher education.

National and international higher education journals and conferences invite them to present their ideas, and higher education trade papers send reporters to advising conferences to glean the new and interesting ideas that their (nonadvising) readers will want to know. In general, as an area of scholarship advising has become much less insular.

### **Advisors Debate Their Ideas about the Future**

With so many different intellectual traditions available for consumption, advisors naturally introduce and debate new ideas about advising practice, philosophy, and intellectual foundations. Any such views will affect the future of the profession. No one can predict the ideas that may emerge from this ferment, nor can one guarantee that the next set of ideas will bear any resemblance to those promoted in this chapter.

### **Reflections: Fantasy and Reality**

The future world of advising I have described is quite different from present reality. To be sure some semblances can be found; for example, current discourse on advising is drawing on a wide and growing range of intellectual traditions. However, as it relates to learning, institutions, and higher education at large, advising remains far from the central influence envisioned in this essay. Readers, even those who may find the ideas herein attractive, are likely to believe that they are idealistic, utopian, and impractical.

The two responses to this observation are both important. First, a utopian vision need not be fully realizable to be valuable. An attractive vision can serve practitioners well by serving as a goal, even as those who are striving to reach it understand that they will not quite succeed. Moreover, it can be a standard against which they measure their actual accomplishments. Visions of social utopias or of human goodness can be useful in these ways.

More important, arguably, the vision presented can be accomplished. It will not be easy, but three initial steps lead to the goal.

1. Institutions must pursue the kinds of learning outcomes that academic advising is uniquely able to facilitate. That is, leadership must commit to the goal of students making intentional connections, creating coherence out of the disparate parts of the curriculum, reflecting on the similarities and differences among ways of knowing and how they complement each other, and the other metacognitive learning objectives described in this chapter. Those who make this decision may also realize that the best people on campus to accomplish the goal are advisors.

2. The advising community must learn to think big and aim high in envisioning a role for the profession in higher education. Advisors cannot permit themselves to be characterized as handmaidens to the “real” work of universities, but must insist that they are central to it. Advisors cannot engender this attitude unilaterally: Others in the institution must recognize advisor talents and insights, and therefore, advisor ability and wisdom must be visible outside the advising community. To gain attention and shine in the spotlight, advisors must make themselves heard in the institution on such topics as curriculum and assessment, and in the wider world, they need to participate in conferences and write on higher education in venues not solely addressed to their fellow advisors.

Advisors who have learned to see their potential must convince policymakers that they are best suited to help meet institutional goals. They must call attention to their key role in learning, pointing out that they teach some of the most important lessons at the university and that advising learning outcomes are central to institutional mission. They must also present themselves, not as drones, but as thought leaders from whom faculty and administrators alike have a great deal to learn.

Some of the measures needed to achieve this future are not under the direct control of advisors. However, none of the vision will come to fruition without advisors taking some of the key first steps on their own.

3. Advisors must invoke their personal visions. Early in this chapter, readers were prompted to think about their visions for advising. Specifically I asked whether the profession as described in the chapter looks promising or whether they prefer their own, different visions that lead to a future and profession different than the one presented here.

In reflecting again on the vision for the future, readers should note that it rests on a theory or philosophy of the essential nature and purpose of advising. In the present chapter, the theory presented—sometimes explicitly stated and sometimes implied—suggests that advising is a fundamentally academic activity focused on teaching and learning as well as the integration of each student’s curriculum. If taken to its logical conclusion, it is the theory that elevates advising to the pinnacle of importance among academic professions.

Readers who favor a different theory about the essential nature of advising and therefore a different vision for the future of the profession may profit from contrasting it with the ideas presented here. Regardless of the preferred vision, the future of the field will be dictated by advisors. Therefore, individually and collectively, advisors must identify a theory that describes the profession, a vision of where it should go, and a path for getting there.

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