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Using Groups in Academic Advising

26th Annual Summer Institute
 SCOTTSDALE, AZ
 July 28-August 2, 2013

Kathy Stockwell
 Fox Valley Technical College

Group Advising

- Group advising must be viewed as a student-centered process in which advising is a shared responsibility
- Group advising is simply an extension of teaching
- Group advising is an efficient way of sharing factual information with advisees



Group Advising

- Group advising enhances peer involvement and the learning community environment
- Group advising needs to incorporate principles of developmental advising philosophy



Group Advising

According to Richard Light.

"To learn from one another, students with different backgrounds and from different racial and ethnic groups must interact."

Making the Most of College, 2001

Group advising is an opportunity for this interaction to occur.

Why Use Group Advising?

- When individual advising is not a viable option—number of students far outweighs the number of available advisors
- When the group to be advised has time constraints
- When there is important information to be shared with a large number of students



Why Use Group Advising?

- To establish peer groups
- For the proactive vs. reactive value—Groups are sometimes BETTER!
- Help for the terminally shy (Learn from listening and even risk a bit)
- Others?
- What are the challenges?



Developmental Advising Principles that are Adaptable to Group Advising

- ✓ Advising is a shared responsibility between advisor and advisee.



- ✓ Advising contributes to the development of problem solving skills, decision-making skills, exploration of career and life goals, and behavioral awareness.
- ✓ Advising, when done well, is a form of teaching.



ARE ADVISING AND TEACHING DIFFERENT?

	<u>TEACHING</u>	<u>ADVISING</u>
Domain	Primarily cognitive	Primarily affective
Delivery	Primarily groups	Usually individually
Delivery	Presentational	Relational
Outcomes	Primarily cognitive growth	Growth along several dimensions
Evaluation	Usually one-way	Two-way (collaborative)
Expertise	Academic discipline	Situational

Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Advising

I. Skills

Teaching

Knowledge of subject matter

Planning and organization of course material

Advising

Knowledge of institutional policies, procedures, programs of study, referral sources

Preparing for advising meetings

Teaching

Engaging students in actual participation in their learning

Giving students feedback on their progress

Helping students learn to analyze and problem solve

Advising

Guiding students to be self-directed and autonomous

Working together the advisor and student regularly evaluate the student's goals and progress toward those goals

Assisting students in decision-making skills

II. Communication

Teaching

Clarity of presentation of subject matter

Establish dialogue with students in the classroom

Demonstrating excellent listening skills, not simply a "talking head"

Advising

Sharing information in a clear manner

Leading students to question and interact with the advisor

Listening both to what advisees are saying verbally and non-verbally

III. Attitudes for both Teaching and Advising

- ✓ Treats students with respect and concern
- ✓ Is accessible and available to students outside the classroom
- ✓ Offers regular encouragement
- ✓ Acts as a role model for students in the higher education process

"Higher learning provides an opportunity for developing persons to plan to achieve self-fulfilling lives. Teaching includes any experience that contributes to individual growth and that can be evaluated. The student should not be a passive receptacle of knowledge, but should share responsibility for learning with the teacher."

Crookston, 1972

Developmental Advising is...

- ✓ Student-centered
- ✓ Responsive to individual student needs
- ✓ Focused on student growth and development
- ✓ Based upon a relationship between advisor and advisee

Developmental Advising Activities

- ✓ Assessment of values, interests, goals, abilities
- ✓ Exploration of educational and career goals
- ✓ Relationship between academic major and career
- ✓ Awareness of the need to plan

Developmental Advising Activities

- ✓ Knowledge of the purpose of General Education requirements and skills they develop
- ✓ Goal-setting and decision-making skills
- ✓ Knowledge and use of resources
- ✓ Selection of courses (particularly electives)
- ✓ Scheduling of classes

Discussion Question

Are these activities transferable to group advising?

Methods for Delivering Group Advising

- ✓ Orientation programs (most frequently used format for group advising).
- ✓ First-year seminar courses (curriculum mirror many of the goals of advising).
- ✓ Learning Communities or Freshman Interest Groups (FIG) usually include some group advising.

Role of Advisors in Learning Communities

1. Can assist in making decisions about the structure of the learning communities
2. Can assist students in the selection of a learning community
3. Can assist in the selection of peer leaders



4. Can assist in administering the program
5. Can teach a first-year seminar as part of a community
6. Can assist in identifying the support needs of both students and faculty in the community

J.W. Bennett,
*Learning Communities: New Structures,
New Partnerships for Learning*, 1999

Other Methods for Delivering Group Advising

- ✓ Advising in Residence Halls
- ✓ Senior Capstone courses
- ✓ Examples?



Group Advising for Special Populations

- ✓ Dual purpose: a means of information sharing and a way of establishing relationships with peers and an advisor/mentor
- ✓ Probation students and those returning following dismissal

- ✓ Honor students
- ✓ Minority students
- ✓ International students
- ✓ Adult learners



- ✓ Over-subscribed majors
- ✓ Undeclared/open option students ("What's my major?" sessions)
- ✓ Others?



Skills Needed

- An understanding of group dynamics
- An understanding of student development
- Strong facilitation skills
- A comfort level with bonding
- A vision of broader purpose
- Knowledge of leading questions
- Use of non-lecture skills
- Appreciation for collaboration

Keys to Successful Group Advising

- Use of group facilitation strategies
- Knowledge of and use of advisee names
- A climate of trust and respect between the advisors and the advisees
- Not letting one advisee dominate the time
- Making sure students understand the overall purpose of advising

Keys to Successful Group Advising

- Ability to answer specific program, course, or scheduling questions
- Providing guidance but insisting that the students make the decisions
- Ability to motivate and encourage
- Knowledge of campus resources
- Knowledge of institutional policies and procedures

Designing Group Sessions

- How many sessions do you need to schedule to accommodate your advisees?
- How flexible do you need to be with times?
 - Make sure you schedule enough times to reach the majority of your advisees
 - Make sure appropriate personnel are available at established times so that all sessions are adequately staffed
 - Log student attendance to find most popular times; adjust for next semester



Designing Group Sessions

- Getting the word out to students
 - E-mail
 - Twitter
 - Blogs
 - Facebook
 - Posters
 - Newsletter
 - Letters handed out in classes or mailed



Designing Group Sessions

- Preparation—what do you need?
 - Program plans
 - Course schedules
 - Planning sheets
- Preparation—what do students need to bring?
 - Degree progress reports
 - Prep sheet



Group Sessions

- The session
 - Introduction
 - Purpose of session
 - General questions and answers
 - Get to the "meat" of the session (scheduling, program overview, etc.)
 - Encourage students to schedule individual advising appointments for more in-depth advising or to discuss personal issues

Groups....A Great Way to Use Peer Advisors

A great way to stretch your resources, expand advising coverage, and help your students develop a relationship with at least one fellow student.

Why Use Peer Advisors?

- Create a larger pool of assistance for students
- Assist faculty advisors by screening easily answered questions in regards to registration
- Research shows that peer advising increases retention rates
- Leverage resources

Peer Advising

Research indicates that peer advising may increase retention.

"Many students believe they can learn (information) much more reliably from their peers."

Campbell & Koring, 2005

Groups instead of, or in addition to?

- Some situations will warrant **only** group advising
- In the ideal setting, group advising would be **one** of the formats used
- Target the static information pieces which typically require a **great** deal of repetition when done in individual sessions
- Emphasize key points of information to be referenced or follow-up on later (labs, office hours)
- Use to plant "seeds" that will encourage students to follow-up with their advisors



Groups instead of, or in addition to?

Coping with the very real challenges already discussed

- May mean not as much time for one-on-one sessions. Personal issues do present some challenges.
- If students are resistant to this format, explain how it can save time and how it functions as part of a series of resources available to them. **Stress that one-on-one appointments are still available and encouraged.**
- Some students may be better served individually; however, in many cases, the group interaction is beneficial to them, and one-on-one appointments can still be scheduled.

Assessment of Group Advising

- The administrator in charge of the program should conduct both formative and summative evaluations of
 - group advisors
 - group advising program

Assessment of Group Advising

- Assessments must include feedback from the students in the advising groups, advisors, and administrators.
- Adjustments and refinements in the program should be made as a result of the assessment.

Core Qualities of a Successful Advisor

- No matter the delivery mode, an advisor who is successful is:
 - Available/accessible
 - Knowledgeable/helpful
 - Personable/approachable
 - Counselor/mentor



Conclusion

- When well done, group advising may:
 - aid retention
 - ease advisors' loads
 - connect students with a peer group that will contribute to their success

And no matter the type of student or the advising format used, always remember

"Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience."

*Richard Light, 2001
Making the Most of College*

QUESTIONS?



Thank you for attending!
Have a *GREAT* day!