Factors to Consider When (Re)Structuring Academic Advising

Marsha Miller

The belief that understanding alone will stir an organization to action is one of mankind's greatest illusions.
Hacken's Law, as quoted by Wes Habley, 2007 NACADA Summer Institute

David Crockett (1988) delineated 51 recommendations for auditing an academic advising program. My experience in restructuring advising services (see a Guide to Restructuring Advising Services) led to the creation this condensed list of factors that, when used in conjunction with Crockett's list and the Academic Advising: A comprehensive handbook, can guide a committee charged with the successful structuring or restructuring of academic advising.

Factors to consider when (re)structuring academic advising:

1. **Status and Need.** What is the current status of academic advising on your campus? What student (and institutional) needs are met by the current system? What needs are not being met? How do you know? Start with the CAS Standards for Academic Advising.

2. **Mission, Vision, and Philosophy of Academic Advising.** What does the institution believe about the role and importance of academic advising? Is there a formal and written advising philosophy easily accessible by all constituents? Is there an advising mission statement? Is there a vision statement to serve as a guide to the future of advising?

3. **Goals and Objectives.** What does the institution want to accomplish as a result of the advising program? What student learning outcomes are desired? What strategies (orientation, intrusive advising, workshops, etc.) need to be implemented to meet these goals and objectives?

4. **Who will advise and who will coordinate advisors?** Will you utilize professional advisors? Peer advisors? Faculty advisors? If you choose faculty, should all faculty advise or should advisors be selected on the basis of desired characteristics and/or willingness to serve? Who will coordinate advising services?

5. **How will advising be delivered?** What advising model will be used to structure the delivery of advising? Will students be advised in person by a faculty member from his or her office? Will there be an Advising Center? Where can students find information if their assigned advisors are not available? Will students need an appointment for advising? Will students have access to electronic advice? What role will the Internet play in advising? Will group advising be utilized?

6. **Information System.** What are the information needs of students and advisors? How can you ensure that both students and advisors have the information they need when they need it while maintaining confidentiality? Is there an updated academic advisor handbook or does one need to be developed or revised?

7. **Advisor/Advisee Responsibilities.** Are there stated expectations for advisors/advisees? Is their an advising syllabus?

8. **Student Participation.** Should all students be required to see an advisor? If not, what criteria will you use to determine who must be advised? How 'intrusive' should your advising program be?

9. **Advisor Load.** What is a reasonable advisor load for your institution's advising situation?

10. **Assignment of students.** What criteria will be employed to assign students to advisors? Will students be assigned alphabetically? based on major? based on their year in school?

11. **Developing Advisors' Skills.** What are the developmental (inservice training) needs of advisors and how might these best be addressed in an advisor training program?

12. **Assessment and Evaluation.** How will you assess and evaluate the effectiveness of your advising program? How will we know if our efforts are successful? What outcomes do we expect? What tools will you use?

13. **Recognition/rewards.** How can you provide a tangible, meaningful, and realistic reward system to advisors?
14. **Integration.** What are the relationships between the advising system and campus resources? Do advisors know when, and how, to refer students to these resources?

15. **Funding.** What are the fiscal requirements of the advising program? Are monies available to adequately meet these needs?

16. **Implementation.** What must be done, and who should be involved, in the implementation of the desired advising program?

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**References:**


