For those who live in the world of research, the notion of research as part of everyday life is a given. But for the typical academic advisor, research is usually not included as part of their job duties. Advising administrators will often take on this role to contribute to the body of knowledge yet it is not always an expectation for primary role advisors.

As the call is sounded for advisors to begin fulfilling the role of “practitioner scholar,” it is quickly met with a myriad of reasons why advisors are not able step into this arena. “How do I get started?” “It is not part of my job.” “I have no funding to support doing research.” Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith and Troxel (2010) explain the danger of frontline advisors not taking part in research that directly affects their occupation: “Unless researcher-practitioners make a concerted effort to reverse the historical trend, the lack of scholarship in advising, particularly scholarship produced and consumed by professional and faculty advisors, will persist” (p.5). Given the current lack of research on the advising field and profession, if advisors are not to pick up the banner, what are the implications?

If and when frontline advisors decide to participate in research, the first question that is typically asked is “How do I even get started?” Eighteen months ago that was the exact question three members of an advising research group on campus were asking themselves while hanging out in a campus library. And really the question was not whether to take on research, but rather what to do. The first step was a presentation at a state advising conference. It was that initial presentation that blossomed into a full-blown research project partially funded by a research grant from NACADA.

Throughout its evolution, the research group has come to realize that it is a journey they never expected to take but are very happy to be where they are. With that, the research group offers some suggestions on how to get started with research in advising:

Don’t fly solo. Research can be daunting just from the mention of the word. It can be even more challenging if an advisor does not have an education or background in research methods. So why would one attempt to start alone? Advisors cultivate support networks and the same should be done with research. Combining energy and resources will help members get through the rough patches. In the end, to have someone to fall back on in times of need is very important. If one is not familiar with or proficient in research, ask someone with experience to participate in the research project. Eventually, adding a team member with doctoral-level proficiency will be necessary if the group plans to submit a project to the institutional review board. Additionally, utilizing on-campus resources is a key component of success; once our group contacted the Office of Sponsored Projects we received invaluable assistance with our grant writing and submission process.

Talk about it. Once a partner or two have been brought together, it’s time to brainstorm. Identify what each member may be interested in exploring. Throw all ideas out on the table and find common ground. This is the ideal starting point. Also, take note of each other’s skills and interests. For instance, when it comes time to assign responsibilities, it will be easy to identify who is better at taking minutes or who might like to try this task in the future.

Follow up. Talk is all well and good, but in order to turn discussion items into action items, someone needs to make sure the group follows through. It may require multiple meetings, conversations, and creativity before a project is chosen. These first, less-structured meetings make it easy to lose sight of the project. To keep the group
on task and moving forward, we recommend assigning three responsibilities at the beginning: A minute taker, an agenda creator and compiler, and a facilitator to run the meeting, keep it on task, and schedule the next meeting.

**Invite complimentary skill sets.** A team is only as strong as its weakest link. Do not be afraid to take an honest look at the characteristics of the team. A new team member may make progressing forward much easier if they have a skill or expertise that others in the group do not possess. Add members to the group to share the load and responsibility, hopefully making the research process manageable and enjoyable. Our group started as two, then three, and now consists of four. Each person was deliberately chosen because of how they could potentially contribute to the group. It is important to not just add people because they are interested but to consciously decide how they can contribute. While each project may have an ideal group size, we caution against making the group too large unless leadership is very strong. As groups grow in size, so must the leadership in order to get things done timely, accurately, and effectively.

**Look at the existing literature.** The next stage in the process after identifying an area of interest is to go out and see what other people have found pertaining to your interest. Others might call this a literature review. The review is very important for many reasons. It will allow researchers to gather information to shape the nature of their research. It also lets them know if they happen to be repeating or duplicating the efforts of previous researchers.

**Do something! Write, present, do more research.** Not all scholarly inquiry or projects will lead to research or being published in an academic journal. Some literature reviews may answer the original question or address the hypothesis but that should not stop the group from continuing their project and producing something from their efforts. Literature reviews often supply more questions than they answer. Many reviews are worthy of publication, a conference proposal, an action committee, or a blog. There are many outlets to pull together findings for others to see, much like this online publication, *Academic Advising Today.*

Our research group entered the process with only a question, not the intention to embark on a research project. The group hopes to continue adding to the body of knowledge of academic advising and hopes others join them in their journey.

**References**