Research in Academic Advising

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NACADA View of Research

NACADA views research as scholarly inquiry into all aspects of the advising interaction, the role of advising in higher education, and the effects that advising can have on students. It regards consuming and producing research as the collective responsibility of all members of the higher education advising community, including advisors, faculty, administrators, and students.

NACADA Task Force on Infusion of Research, 2008

Boyer’s Four Elements of Scholarship

DISCOVERY: investigative, in search of new information. Typically thought as “scientific” research.

INTEGRATION: exploring connections and examining contexts in an interdisciplinary and interpretive way.

APPLICATION: seeking out of ways in which knowledge can solve problems.

TEACHING (SOTL): examine the ways that knowledgeable others can facilitate learning for others.


Why Research Academic Advising?

• Academic advising is an integral part of student development
• Academic advising is teaching, with a discipline and effective pedagogical practices
• Professional disciplines use inquiry and resulting data to inform decision making
• There is much anecdotal information, but little scholarship

Wide Range of Audiences

• Peers in academic advising
• Advising administrators
• Higher Education and Academic Advising
• Deans, Provosts, and Presidents
• Full-time and faculty advisors
• Students and Parents

Scholarly Inquiry May Include…

• Hypothesis testing
• Replication of findings in new setting
• Discovery of a novel phenomenon
• Development of a new theory
• Creation of new knowledge
• Evaluation of effectiveness of new advising strategy
Data Collection: Qualitative versus Quantitative

• Qualitative methods create data sets containing words, derived from interviews and observations that are analyzed using the appropriate interpretive techniques.

• Quantitative methods create data sets containing numbers that are analyzed using the appropriate statistical techniques.

Use Qualitative methods when:
- The inquiry questions require deep understanding from multiple perspectives.
- Little is known about the topic being assessed.

Use Quantitative methods when:
- The inquiry questions require a breadth of perspectives on the construct.
- Desire to isolate the relationships between two or more variables.

Core Skills in Conducting Research

1. Identify the problem
2. Review information in the literature about the problem
3. Formulate and revise the question (revise again)
4. Identify the population and select the sample
5. Collect data
6. Analyze data
7. Interpret data and connect back to literature

I. Identify the Problem

II. Review the Information

Identify three topics related to academic advising on your campus that are currently “hot” topics. What are you or others most curious about or most concerned about?

1.
2.
3.

Can you put one of these into the format of a research question?
Conduct Extensive Literature Review
NACADA Journal (ERIC, Social Science Citation Index, Education Abstracts, Psych Abstracts, etc.)
- improve your knowledge base
- build upon previous research efforts
- look for good methodology models
- become familiar with research publication formats
- establish basis to justify and support your research (and advising) efforts

What to review?
- previous research on same topics
- previous research on related topics ("parallel")
- research population (subjects)
- research techniques (methods)
- research materials (surveys, tests)
- theoretical frameworks

When do I review the literature?
- at the start
- throughout the research process
- immediately prior to submission
- during revision process (if necessary)
- nearing final publication

III. Formulate the Question

- Outline your thoughts and explore the purpose of conducting the scholarly inquiry relationships
- Identify the explicit question you wish to study
  - What is the relationship…
  - To what extent does…
  - What is the impact of ….
- Share the question with colleagues and revise several times

IV. Identify the Population and Sample
Sample Selection
• Define potential participants; what voices do you want in your study
• How will you select and contact the appropriate number of people?
• Will you need to IRB and informed consent?

Most post-secondary institutions have a person or committee that reviews proposed research and supports or rejects the use of humans as subjects. These may be termed:
- Human Subjects Committee
- Institutional Review Board

• You must obtain clearance from your respective review entity in order to conduct your research
• All federally funded research requires approval at both the institutional level and the federal level
  Note: NACADA requires institutional support to be considered for a NACADA Research Grant

Other Considerations
• Think about ways to provide research findings back to participants - honor their voices and contributions
• Stay true to your consent forms and the integrity of the protections of human participants

V. Collect the Data
• Use data collection technique that is most suited to adequately answer your research question
  • Clearly identify the limitations of your choice
  • Consider multiple or mixed methods when appropriate
  • Do not get caught up in the false dichotomy of qualitative vs. quantitative
VI. Analyze the Data

- Carefully organize data for analysis (use data tools such as SPSS or NVIVO)
- Clearly describe the steps in the analysis procedures (make notations if you change plans)
- Be sure you can defend your decisions and conclusions

VII. Draw Conclusions

Consider the observed facts and the way in which you arrived at those facts. Then draw conclusions from your results. Conclusions may or may not:

- support your hypothesis
- refine an existing theory
- develop a new theory
- justify or prove program effectiveness
- improve the practice of a single advisor

Conclusion

- Commit yourself to the time and resources needed for yourself and your staff
- Ask for help from colleagues and collaborate with others
- Follow sound research practices from the start
- Submit your work for peer review

NACADA Research Committee web site: http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/AdministrativeDivision/research.htm

For information on:

- NACADA's research agenda
- Writing a NACADA research grant
- Additional research resources
- Contact information