**NACADA Reads Spring 2016 – New Advisor Guidebook**

**Jennifer Joslin:** Welcome to NACADA reads, where we’ll be discussing the “New Advisor Guidebook”. It’s a really great offering out of the NACADA publications. It was edited by Frank Olson, Pat Yoder and myself, and I would still say it’s terrific, even though I am involved. I have to say there are amazing tips and strategies and really great articles of which these two authors today are just a really fine example. We want to thank Jossey-Bass for the free downloadable versions that are available to our participants today, and we thank Marsha Miller for helping us arrange that.

We’re going to start today by talking about the two sections under discussion, which are Karen Archambault’s piece *“Developing Self Knowledge: A First Step Towards Cultural Competence”,* and Anna Chow’s “*Voices from the Field: Advising International Students*.” We’re very fortunate to be joined by both these authors today, two very involved NACADA members. Karen Archambault serves as the Director for Enrollment Management at Rowan College in Burlington County. She regularly writes for NACADA and has recently been elected to the Board of Directors. Welcome, Karen! And Anna Chow is the Director of the College of Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Advising Center at Washington State University. She’s had research grants for her travel grants to Shanghai. She’s been chair of NACADA’s Global Engagement Mission, and she’s been on several of our panels about working with, engaging and maximizing what we do with international students. Thank you, Anna. We’re thrilled that you’re here. Both Karen and Anna are members of our Emerging Leaders Program, so it’s a treat that we can have one more interaction together.

We’ll turn first to Karen.

**Karen Archambault:** Welcome everyone. I know Anna and I are thrilled to be here to speak about the two chapters we’ve written. Where we want to start are the questions of how theory, research and practice all fit together, how the theories we study are put into practice every day. As we start to think about the chapter, the ways our students come to university and we think about their time with us, very often we put the focus on our students. We ask “What are they like? What differences do they bring to campus? What are the ways they are not like us?” But in reality, we really benefit from looking at ourselves first. Much like our students, we are incredibly complex creatures. We are different today from what we were yesterday. We are certainly different as we progress along in our careers, but we’re also carrying those experiences that we’ve had with us. And so we want to think of ourselves as very like our students. Our complexities are often hidden, and they’re under a much broader umbrella of diversity than we might think of. When we think of diversity, we often only think exclusively of race, gender, sexual orientation. We may or may not think of the multitude of ways that each of us is different from another. So we want to recognize how we turn that focus on ourselves and what we are each like.

After we’ve had some of that thought, we want to think about the kinds of institutions we work in, and one of the models I’ve become comfortable with over the years is Fullman and Deal’s model which tackles four different frames. And I know there were some questions on the Google Doc about how you think about those frames, what kind of frame are you in? The chart I have up helps your walk through that. The four frames are structural, human resources, political and symbolic, and each one has their own characteristics. I know for myself, when I was first introduced to this framework, I had an “aha” moment, knowing that’s the kind of structure I work in.

So if you’re in a structural environment, you’re going to hear concepts about efficiency. How do we work smarter, not harder? How do we keep to task? And the viewpoint might be thrown around, positively or negatively, referring to your organization as a business or a factory. There might be conversations about how quickly you get your students through. On the other hand, there might be conversations like “We treat our students like a number.” So any of these frames can be positive or negative.

The second is a human resource frame. If you’re in this frame, you usually know it. The conversations are “We’re like family.” The role of leadership is one of empowerment. It’s not so much about how you fit in your role, but the relationships between people.

In a political frame, you might have a sense of whatever happens in your organization is dependent upon power and competition. You might feel you’re competing for resources, or that a good leader is one who is advocating for your needs over another’s in that competition.

The fourth frame is symbolic. This is a storytelling framework, one that when people are thinking about the stories, the history, the ways things used to be, the symbols we might think of. I worked previously at an institution that spent most of its year going from symbol to symbol. I don’t mean that negatively at all. They went from one event to another all tied to the history of the institution. Things were built on how you created meaning out of the things in your daily life.

One thing to keep in mind with these frameworks is they’re not all necessarily one thing in one place in your institution. You could conceivably work for a symbolic boss that is in a political division within a structural institution. But understanding how they interconnect really help us understand how we fit within our institution. How do we understand ourselves and how we fit in the institution?

The first three questions in the chapter are an exercise in self-awareness. To put them simply, “Are my students like me? Am I making assumptions? How does this student fit my view of my campus?” All of these questions are about me. How do I get a better view of myself in a way that will inform what’s going on with my student?

The fourth and fifth are really questions about identifying support. How will this student be successful? When we think about this question, we tend to operate from a deficit structure. We think when a student comes in with any number of characteristics, we assume they’re coming to address what is wrong with them instead of what might be right. Here’s why that student might be likely to fail. Whatever the framework is at your institution, it tends to be about “fixing” the student, how do we make them fit in? What I suggest here is we flip that on its head. We think about it from a strengths perspective and not a deficit perspective. What are the things about this student that are likely to make this student successful? What do they bring to the table? Are they characteristics that are visible, or invisible until they’re probed about it? What about this student makes success a possibility, even if we don’t think it’s a likelihood after our first meeting?

And then that fifth question, “How will we support this student?” How do we serve our colleagues? How do we serve our campus? We must serve as the hub for the student that walks in the door. I know there are still institutions that still think advising is translating the catalogue, that they think advising is finding out where page 26 meets page 27, and knowing what the given criteria of a given degree plan is, and that’s the beginning and end of advising. Certainly all of our strong academic advisors need to know their plans, their curriculums, but they also need to serve as the hub for all the information a student might need about their campus. They need to understand everything from the admissions office to the way a student graduates. So often an advisor is often the key contact a student has on the campus. When we think about these five questions, they’re really a lesson in ally-ship, and the question is how well we know their background and how well their background fits in with us. All of us need to learn what we don’t know about our students, and I would argue that by being here today, all of you are trying to find out what we don’t know; find what challenges your thoughts and notions, what reinforces what you already know but adds an extra layer, and we need to embrace our students as they embrace themselves. When a probationary student comes in the door, I make the assumption that they’re not trying or they don’t know enough, I should recognize that there are things I can’t see. Help them to realize when they walk in on their first day that they should be a different version of themselves than when they walk out that door on graduation day. Be a part of their developmental process. It’s not about abandoning yourself, but saying how do you become a better version of yourself two years on at a community college or four years on at a university or longer for our part-time students. Recognize how well our students understand themselves, and embrace that understanding.

At this point, I’ll now turn it over to Anna for a few words on advising international students.

**Anna Chow:** Great! I’m also very happy to be with you today to talk a little bit about advising international students on your campuses. Transitioning from Karen’s piece to mine, developing cultural competence, knowing your own limitations, and understand diverse populations definitely connect very well with international students. I want to start by giving you some of data about international students, and it’s available from the Institute of International Education. I encourage you to look up their information on iie.org because they have a lot of information also about domestic students that study abroad.

During the 2014-2015 year, almost 975,000 international students studied in the U.S. Compared to the previous year, it grew 10%, the highest rate of growth since ’78-’79. Some of the top countries are China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. These four countries make up 60% of international students last year. Top majors are engineering, math, computer science and business administration. About 64% come with personal funding, 21% were university funded, and 8% had foreign government funding. Last year, international students contributed $30.8 billion into the U.S. economy, and because they are such an important revenue stream, many universities have robust international recruitment efforts.

As academic advisor, many of the issues we encounter when working with international students are related to communication and/or differences in our educational systems. Our institutions have different TOEFL score requirements and TOEFL is an English proficiency exam. Typically at four-year universities, the TOEFL score is a little higher than at community colleges, and so as advisors we’re working with varying levels of English proficiency. Some students might be very proficient, especially if they transfer to a four year school from a community college, but others might need extra help when you’re working with them. I was an international student, and when I first starting communicating in English, my second language, there was significant anxiety when it came to communicating in English. There might be times when there is confusion with what we’re communicating with them. Speak clearly and don’t use idioms or acronyms. One example I remember from my ESL class is “raining cats and dogs”. It’s one I never understood, and even today I still never use it. On a campus, these different units use different acronyms, so if a student doesn’t understand, just ask them or write it down or follow up with an email. This was also baffling to me when I first moved to California; Daylight Savings Time. When you had to reset your clock that was always really strange to me.

Ok, so looking at different educational systems. I’ll give an example. Chinese students come from an educational system that’s based heavily on rote memorization and test-taking. So when the encounter classes that require critical thinking and voicing their opinion, they might find that quite challenging. Knowing that international students are unfamiliar with U.S. institutions, we might need to address a couple of different topics. For example, discussion. What’s the difference between a seminar versus a discussion versus an online class. In regards to grading, what’s the difference between a graded course versus a pass-fail class. GPA, what’s the difference between cumulative GPA and major GPA? And the general education requirements might need some explaining. For example, Chinese students when they graduate from high school go right into a major, so they may not have a concept of general education requirements. Help them understand the importance of GER classes. Campus resources are also very important. Knowing where to get help. For example if they need the writing center to review their papers, where do they go when the get sick. Giving them a contact number, helping find the building on a campus map will help them feel more at ease about who they’re seeing.

Going back to our discussion about cultural competence, and knowing yourself; the questions that were posed in Karen’s chapter and in my chapter, I want to make two points. As Karen mentioned, when working with international students it is ok to lack cultural knowledge of their home country or to even know where their home country is even located. I freely admit I’m the most geographically challenged person in my family. My eleven year old and my eight year old can easily kick my butt in a geography contest, so when I don’t know about a student’s country or language, I just ask. If you show genuine interest, they’ll be happy to share that information with you. Oftentimes as advisors, we feel we need to know everything. That’s just not possible. The first step to learning something new is admitting you don’t know. In the Google Doc, it was encouraging to see that many of you had reached out to advisors, ESL coordinators, financial aid officers for help, so it’s good to see you don’t feel isolated when facing difficulty advising international students. I know we have a program here at Washington State where they reach out to faculty who have studied extensively in another country or received their degree from a foreign university, so that’s another campus resource you could look into as well.

Another important theory I want you to consider as advisors is cultural capital. Cultural capital is defined as previously acquired knowledge that is required to successfully navigate a particular environment. For example, having the tools and skills necessary to succeed in a university setting. When we think of non-first generation students, they already have the skills and knowledge to succeed in the college environment. They’re legacy students. When we compare these domestic legacy students to international students from China or Saudi Arabia, these students are not only new to our campus, but to our language and our culture as well. On top of all that, they don’t have families around to offer advice. They deal with homesickness, culture shock, language barriers, immigration laws and policies, and university requirements that they have to navigate successfully. It is in these instances that advisors can be a teacher and be the resource they need to be successful. And although they might lack grammar skills or an understanding of the American educational system, they do have their own set of cultural capital that they’ve brought with them to the U.S. And one of the reasons universities recruit international students is because they bring a set of diversity to campus, and we want our domestic students to learn from our international students so they can become better-prepared, global citizens. Imagine how much we can learn from a Muslim student in a religion class or a Laotian refugee in a foreign policy course!

So in conclusion, knowing that there are certain norms and privileges that are promoted through mainstream culture, we need to help our international students realize that their voices are worth hearing and encouraging them to speak up in class. As Karen mentioned to come from a place of strength, not deficit, and help them realize they contribute as well. The opportunity to learn from each other is endless and we need to open up and recognize each other is unique. Although they may come from different countries, they will also have differences.

**Jennifer:** Thank you Karen and Anna. Thank you Karen for handling the slideshow progression. If you’re just joining us midstream, we’ll be opening it up for questions to our two participants for NACADA Reads online book club. This spring’s selection was from the “New Advisor Guidebook”, which is awesome, and we’re lucky to be here with two of its authors, Karen Archambaugh and Anna Chow.

I want to come back to something that you said, Karen, and also incorporate some of our Google questions. Again we had three different Google Docs that accompanied three different questions for our readers. And if you’re interested, those are all there on the “NACADA Reads” section of our website. One of our advisors from a community college in the Northeast said she’s a major advisor and was having conversations with students about choosing a major. She’s in Mathematics and they had lots of conversations about math and she shared her story. After reading the chapter, she realized she was only having the math conversation and was missing out on all the different conversations she could have been having. What advice do you have for her? How can we encourage people to have the different kinds of conversations?

**Karen:** It kind of keys in with what Anna said about the role of general education in our system. Anna mentioned that they may not understand what general education’s purpose is, and many of our domestic students don’t even understand it. Our major advisors are very talented and may have a great understanding of the content knowledge and can talk about the student holistically and good at identifying the coursework that will bring you towards this outcome, but we see so many students who come in and change their minds. So I think that reader’s notion that the conversation needs to be bigger is so incredibly important, because many of our students may come up with something that is going to shift their mind from what they want to do. My own realization that I wanted to be in higher ed didn’t come until an undergrad degree, a master’s degree and one year of doctoral work, and I had a faculty member who said “I don’t know what you want to do with your life, but you should work with college students, because you really seem to get that.” I said, “Oh that’s a job?!” I didn’t understand that. I think about the many conversations I had along the way where I could have been helped. Advisors have to ask “What are you doing with your life? What makes you excited about being a human being?” We tend to default those questions to coursework, and that reader has such an important point. Even if I’m a math advisor, my conversation can’t just be about math. It needs to be about the student.

**Jennifer:** Such a powerful message, in part because I found that if you’re title is academic advisor or retention specialist, you’re only talking about class. Now of course our colleagues in TRIO and special support services and other types of academic advising where they establish different goals right away, there is a more fluid expectation. But in some advising situations, it appears to the student that you are the only one who is supposed to talk about the courses. That also makes a big difference.

How do we break through? Do we ask the student if they’re getting the support somewhere else? How do we keep working on that?

**Anna:** I think that’s a difficult line to draw. Sometimes, they’ll be very forthcoming and ask questions. Other times, they’re more reserved and might defer to you to ask questions. My personal philosophy is that I always ask, because if I don’t then it makes me feel as if I should have asked. And if they don’t ask questions, I always share the resources so they can follow up with other resources, or send me an email as a follow-up if they think of something. If I sense they are in need of additional resources then I always offer. But that’s just me.

**Karen:** I think I would agree, but a big piece is knowing how to ask the question. The question of “Are your parents supportive of you going to college?” is a very restrictive question. It assumes everyone has parents. Instead ask “Who do you have who can support you?” That’s a much more open question and it brings in the boyfriend/girlfriend/best friend/boss or whatever. I have worked with students who don’t have a parent or guardian, but they have a best friend who they think of as their family. It may be the best friend’s parents since I was five and that’s their family. Very often, it’s asking broader questions, it’s not painting them into a corner or looking for something that isn’t there. If we have the “Ally” poster in our office and we see them looking at it, we can’t make assumptions as to why they’re looking at it. We can’t assume it’s because they want to talk to us about coming out. Instead we need to recognize it may be because their uncomfortable with that poster being there. We may not like that, but it’s their reality. I think it’s broadening those questions so they can be able to say “This is who I have. This person is here to help.” I’ve been at my institution for six months, and we started off with a conversation about parent access, and we very quickly shifted that language into family access because parent is an exclusive term. And that’s an example of our language to students that it may not be as caring as it needs to be. We mean it as a helpful question, but it does put that student in the position of not wanting to ask. I think that helps a lot.

**Jennifer:** One of our participants is asking how we build rapport on large campuses when you have a large caseload. Suggestions? This is basically the miracle question.

**Karen:** Anna and I are going to be billionaires if we figure out that question! I think it’s not only are you a hub of information, but you’re not the only hub. We have times when we do back-to-back walk-ins based on the workflow, there are the times when my caseload is such that I can’t give them the in-depth conversations that I might want. But if you recognize that there’s something that might need bigger discussion, can I make that a follow-up? And can I also have a resource, a handout or a website, so I don’t have to spend every student appointment probing into everything, but instead talk about what a supportive campus you have, and that these are the support systems. And going back to Anna’s point, if you need a specific referral, you can follow up with me. Sometimes we get caught in the framework of we have such a big caseload that we can’t get anything done, we have small steps we can take that are well worth it. If you have a half hour appointment and you spend 20 minutes of it going over schedule or how to navigate your web advising system, then figure out how to move that out of your advising conversations, how to get that into more of a workshop setting so you can get to the stuff that’s more about the individual student.

**Anna:** I would agree. We always think we get the students who come into our office that are not prepared. All they want is “Can you tell me what classes to take next semester?” and all they want is their hold taken off if you have a mandatory hold system like at Washington State. You’ll get those students who just want their hold off and then they leave. Other times we get student who you think are coming in to talk about a certain topic and you end up talking about a mental health issue or a breakup and you’re the only person on campus that they feel like connecting with. A lot of times we don’t have enough time to go over all the important issues and resources and like Karen said, what site do I refer them to for that information? They come in with all sorts of different questions, and sometimes you can’t prepare for an advising session because you don’t know what will come up. Again, don’t feel like you need to know everything. Take that pressure off of yourself. Be forthright. Look up the answer together.

**Karen:** And there was a question on the chat regarding the amount of time that takes, and my comment on the chat was its part of relationship building, but I think that comes from your entire advising staff having that relationship with the students. We can’t guarantee the student is going to see the same advisor every time. It’s a question of the philosophy of your advising office and making sure everyone is on the same page and making sure that information is available from everyone. If a student comes in three or four times in a semester and see the same advisor that has the feeling of being a continual conversation rather than an entirely disparate conversation.

**Jennifer:** Thank you. That’s a good dialogue going on. We have a few questions about advising international students and I want to answer them in the context of the five questions if we can. We have a question asking about working with international students used to cohort models and questions of source material and citing references and things like that and also communication barriers. Where should a student who’s beginning to work with international students start, Anna? Would it be best to know where the students coming to your institution are from? Do we start with general self-reflection work? All of the above?

**Anna:** I think that depends on the student population you’re working with. Are you finding a specific group of students who are running into issues with plagiarism? Then do some more research on their cultural background as to why they might be having honors violation issues. Also look into international education programs. Is there a piece in your international program that gives workshops about proper citations and what it means to plagiarize on a college campus. To give you a background on a little bit of research I’ve done with Chinese students. They’re used to a cohort model and might request they come into a group advising setting and they might want to bring a friend, so you run into confidentiality issues. But they do come from a system where they enter their majors in a cohort, all the people in the cohort live in the same building, they take the same classes, and they build a close relationship with their cohort. You often will see that translate onto your campus where they only hang around with friends from the same country. I’ve heard advisors discourage that. They’re not learning American culture. They’re only communicating in Chinese, why don’t they learn to speak English? But it’s the educational background that they come with. So we need to encourage them participate in other ways.

And regarding plagiarism, Chinese students are brought up to believe the great works are from ancient philosophers and are encouraged to memorize these theories and philosophies, but they’re not encouraged to come up with their own, because that can be seen as arrogant in Chinese culture. Often in class you’ll see they test their knowledge by whether or not they’ve memorized something and can recite it. So when they enter American education where we value coming up with our own idea or an idea that supports your own idea, they may struggle with how to do that. I would look at your own campus and see if they have workshops on that built into their international admissions program.

**Jennifer:** Anna earlier you had said “the first step to learning is to admit you don’t know”. I want you both to speak to that. And my question is being vulnerable at work, committing to that vulnerability at work. With students that can be hard. How can we strengthen that habit?

**Karen:** When we start off with that question, it sounds ridiculous, but practice it. Think of people you can be vulnerable with; your best work friend. Focus on expanding who is within that circle. Go to an office you don’t interact with regularly and ask them what their work looks like on a regular basis. That starts a dialogue of that person coming to you for the same thing, and that can expand across your campus. Obviously the larger your campus, the harder that will be to know everything, but you have to try. We can find things that we’re comfortable not knowing. We don’t care if we don’t know about a particular academic department, but that might be a good place to start those conversations. Those are a good place to start, because they’re low vulnerability and you can gradually become more vulnerable until you’re to the point where you can admit you have no idea and can ask to be taught. To work well with your students, you’re simultaneously in the role of teacher and learner, and if we leave the learner piece behind, we miss a lot with our students. I don’t know everything. And you don’t have to say those words, you just have to know it in your head. Pick out five things you don’t know how to do. It can be ridiculous. I don’t know how to drive a racecar. Someone could teach me that. It might go badly, but it could be taught. I don’t know how to do physics. Someone could teach me that. But I also don’t know a student’s experience, but admit to being vulnerable and you can fix that. It becomes a lot easier to say “I know what I don’t know.”

**Anna:** Yes, that’s a good point. Having worked in higher ed for many, many years, we know that policies change all the time, so it’s impossible to come from a point in my mind where I think I know EVERYTHING. I have a list of resources on campus of people I can turn to, and I ask a lot of questions. And as you get older, your memory isn’t as good. So I don’t remember the form numbers or the statistics, so I say feel free to reach out to your contacts.

I have a specific example from last summer during freshman orientation I was backup for a STEM advisor and I had been in liberal arts for 12 years. The student comes in and wants to major in biochemistry, and I had no idea what classes to put the student in. Luckily, I used my contact in that department to find the answer. No one has ever reprimanded me to asking.

**Jennifer:** That’s a good thing! We have time for one more question. I wanted to speak to our colleagues that are mainly in online advising, and of course it’s not nearly what it was 15 years ago with Skype, Facebook, and Zoom, because of course online advisors are not just via email, they’re on these platforms as well. Is there any way this rapport shouldn’t take place as richly in an online advising situation?

**Karen:** I think first of all, my first advising experience was online. I only contacted them via phone or email. I didn’t know anything about them other than their name, major, and ID number. No visual cues to tell if something made sense or not. Those tools have changed things so much. There’s a look of confusion when they don’t understand that you lose. But I’d go back earlier to what I said about those broad questions. Don’t assume they fit into what we think of as the online model. The online model is built for people who are working adults, trying to fit school in at three in the morning. I’ll say for the great majority of our online students live within ten miles of the campus, and are in online in addition to campus courses. They take online courses not because of their characteristics, but because of scheduling. That broad question piece is applicable to someone who advises online, over the phone, or face to face. That makes room for our vulnerability. Of the five questions, that’s the one that most resonates with me. Leave you assumptions at the door. I have to engage with the student on the assumptions I’m making, rather than assuming I’m accurate.

**Anna:** Yeah, and then I think there’s a lot we can’t see but what we can see is their grades. So if they’re not progressing well, you can reach out to them. Is this not a good time to take an online class? Do you have personal issues? Can I help? So I encourage you to keep those lines of communication open even though you’re not meeting in person.

**Jennifer:** Thank you both for your hard work and being part of such a great writing project.
We appreciate your volunteer spirit to be a part of “NACADA Reads”. All these videos and docs are collected and archived on the website. Thank you to everyone involved to make this third webinar a success.