



Academic Advising Tip Sheet

Number 2: Winter 2011/12

Compiled by Undergraduate Retention Committee with input from Undergraduate Coordinator's Committee

Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience. What better way to honor our students, than to ask them about their college experiences? By taking what they say seriously, we can implement ideas that can help students succeed and prosper on our campuses.

Enhancing Students' College Experience with Specific Advising Suggestions

1. Interactive relationships organized around academic work are vital.

A common wisdom exists that the best advice for students, in addition to attending classes and doing homework, is: get involved in campus activities. Yet there is a different kind of involvement, a more subtle kind that is stressed by the happiest and academically most successful undergraduates.

Nearly without exception, some students have at least one, and often more than one, intense relationship built around academic work with other people. Some have it with a professor. Others have it with an advisor. Some build it with a group of fellow students outside of the classroom. The critical point is that this relationship is not merely social. Nearly without exception, students who feel they have yet to 'find themselves' report that they have not developed such relationships.

Advisors should encourage students to work in small study groups outside of classes. While this may be easier to implement on residential campuses than on commuter campuses, it is still important for students to meet and work collaboratively on their academic assignments especially for classes in math, engineering, the sciences, and courses requiring writing.

2. Students value strong writing skills. Many benefit enormously from specific suggestions.

Students who improve their writing describe an intense and fairly specific process working with a professor, a writing teacher, or most often with a small group of fellow students who meet regularly to critique on another's writing. The longer this work-related engagement lasts, the greater the improvement. *(The Writing Center at University of Detroit Mercy located in Briggs Building 135, contact: 313-993-1022)*

3. Choose a portfolio of classes wisely - consider class size.

Many new students choose individual courses based upon the familiar or the intriguing. Yet choosing individual courses is different from putting together a group of courses that can lead to a productive term. Although some students take class size into account when choosing a course, a significant minority don't. This could be a mistake. Students who choose at least one small course each term have, on the average, a significantly better overall experience than those who don't. These differences carry through the students' college careers.

4. Some undergraduates are thrilled with their college experience, while others are disappointed.

This simple observation has major implications for advisors. When talking with first year students, advise them not to just choose large, introductory courses during first and second years at college. Instead, capitalize on the strengths of each student and encourage them to "stretch" and take at least one smaller, more focused, more challenging class where they will have to talk, write, and become engaged.

Light, R. J. (2003). Enhancing Students' College Experience with Specific Advising Suggestions. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/dev_adv.htm



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Developmental Academic Advising

In 1972, Burns B. Crookston wrote an article in the Journal of College Student Personnel titled "A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching" - the term *developmental academic advising* was born.

Developmental academic advising is both a process and an orientation. It reflects the idea of movement and progression. **It goes beyond simply giving information or signing a form.** As Raushi (1993) suggests, "to advise from a developmental perspective is to view students at work on life tasks in the context of their whole life settings, including the college experience" (p. 6). Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment, it focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person's own life stage of development. Numerous authors (Creamer, 2000; Creamer & Creamer, 1994; Raushi 1993; Winston, et. al., 1984) show that developmental advising is grounded in theory, including cognitive developmental theory, psychosocial theory, and person-environment interaction theory, as well as in theories that focus on specific populations.

Developmental advising is based on "the belief that the relationship itself is one in which the academic advisor and the student differentially engage in a series of developmental tasks, the successful completion of which results in varying degrees of learning *by both parties* ." Frost (2003) notes that "developmental advising understands advising as a system of shared responsibility in which the primary goal is to help the student take responsibility for his or her decisions and actions" (p. 234).

In conclusion, Winston, et. al. (1984) describe academic advising as follows: "Developmental academic advising is defined as a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources" (p.19). To advise a student developmentally, Kramer (1999) suggests the following:

- 1. Know/apply student development theory.**
- 2. Focus on students; their on-going needs over an extended period of time. One advising session builds upon another.**
- 3. Challenge students to achieve their learning potential and to take academic risks.**
- 4. View students as active partners actively engaged in intellectual and personal growth.**
- 5. Help students think about and articulate what is important to them in their academic as well as their personal lives.**
- 6. Set short-term as well as long-term goals, discuss ways to achieve those goals, and help the student monitor progress in fulfilling those goals.**

King, M. C. (2005). Developmental academic advising. Retrieved from *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources*
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