PART FIVE

DELIVERING ADVISING

Advising delivery situations vary widely across academe. Some institutions, or units within them, require one-to-one advising with regular appointments between students and advisors, while others lack resources for this type of advising. Building good advising systems in unique, and sometimes challenging, academic environments requires creativity and commitment. Contributors to this section examine some extant advising structures and offer insight into ways excellent advising can be practiced in all types of postsecondary settings.

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ONE-TO-ONE ADVISING

Charlie L. Nutt

In one-to-one advising sessions advisors fully integrate and apply the conceptual, informational, and relational components of advising. This chapter, considered a classic in the field, was originally published in the first edition of Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook *(Gordon & Habley,* 2000*) and is reprinted with permission. The editors' additions reflect changes that place the chapter within the context of this book and reflect new research or changes in practice since its initial publication.*

Academic advising at its very best is a supportive and interactive relationship between students and advisors. Susan Frost, in *Academic Advising for Student Success: A System of Shared Responsibility* (1991), states that this relationship is important for three reasons: "(1) advising, unlike most out-of-class activities, is a service provided to most students; (2) advising provides a natural setting for out-of-class contacts with faculty to occur; and (3) advising involves intellectual matters, the most important area of concern for students" (p. 10). Often the one-to-one relationship between the student and advisor is the only opportunity a student has to build a personal link with the institution; it thereby has a profound effect on the student's academic career and on the student's satisfaction with the institution. Chickering and Gamson (1987) state that frequent faculty–student contact is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement and can provide students with the support needed to get through the hard times and keep working toward academic success. Therefore, it is clear that the value of the one-to-one academic advising relationship to students' success cannot be underestimated.

Necessary Interpersonal Skills

The one-to-one relationship is often not developed, due to advisors' lack of clarity about the skills and competencies that are vital to the effectiveness of such academic advising. Advisors must of course have clear knowledge of the academic programs and

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curriculum requirements at their institutions. One of students' most stated expectations of an advisor is the ability to give accurate and correct academic guidance. However, effective communication is also key to the one-to-one academic advising relationship. Unfortunately, advisors find it easy to revert to being the "teller" or the "expert" in the relationship, focusing primarily on the information they have to deliver to the student. Instead, advisors must be aware that one-to-one academic advising must be built on shared communication, which requires a different set of skills than those required in a one-way communication, including communication skills, questioning skills, and referral skills [as well as competencies in applying advising approaches].

Communication Skills

Communication skills are perhaps the most important set of skills needed by advisors in building relationships with their advisees. Yet these are often the skills most overlooked in advisor training or development programs. Advisors must understand that listening effectively to both what their advisees are saying and what they are not saying is an essential communication skill in creating an environment of trust in the advising relationship. The communication skills that advisors should demonstrate are as follows:

1. *Establishing and maintaining eye contact with students* [as culturally appropriate]. Students must feel they have the undivided attention of their advisors if they are to communicate openly and honestly on issues of concern. In addition, maintaining eye contact with students can enable advisors to pick up on nonverbal clues that students may be giving that contradict their words. [In situations in which the advisor or the student feels that eye contact is inappropriate, advisors must rely on other relational skills to indicate open and honest communication practices and to appreciate nonverbal cues from students.]
2. *Avoiding the inclination to interrupt students with solutions before students have fully explained their ideas or problems.* Advisors often fall quickly into the "savior mode" instead of giving students the chance to express themselves fully, resulting in communication becoming only one-way.
3. *Being aware of body language.* Students can tell immediately whether an advisor is listening or not by the body-language message the advisor sends. Shuffling papers, allowing for distractions such as telephone calls, and facing away from the student are all nonverbal clues that the advisor is more interested in the daily routine than in the advising session. Advisors should also be aware of the body language of their students. Students can portray many feelings through their body language that they would never express openly. Folded arms, nervous gestures, slouched posture, or physically turning away from the advisor are all examples of body language that may indicate feelings of anger, frustration, or depression.

4. *Focusing on the content of students' words.* Advisors must listen to the words and phrases that students use in conversation. They must be sure they understand clearly the facts of the issues or problems being discussed. It is important that advisors ask leading or probing questions if necessary to be sure they have understood distinctly the content of the conversation.
5. *Focusing on the tone of students' words.* Listening is paying attention to both what is being said and what is not being said. Often the tone of students' words or their facial expressions are more important than what they are saying. Advisors should listen carefully to students' voice levels or the distinctions they make in order to pick up on issues of major concern. In addition, tone of voice can often indicate to advisors a student's state of mind or well-being.
6. *Acknowledging what students are saying through verbal and nonverbal feedback.* This may include simply nodding one's head or responding to students with "yes" or "I see."
7. *Reflecting on or paraphrasing what students have said.* After students have finished talking, advisors must demonstrate that they have been listening by repeating back in their own words what students have said. This provides students with the opportunity to clarify what they have said and to correct any misunderstandings.

Questioning Skills

In addition to having good listening skills, advisors must become adept at using questioning skills. Learning how to ask questions effectively in order to assist students is vitally important in the one-to-one advising relationship. The key to effective questioning is to focus the questions on the concerns of the student and not on the concerns of the advisor. Advisors must develop skills in using both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions are invitations to students to talk more openly about concerns or issues without feeling as if the advisor is setting the agenda of the session. One strategy for using effective open-ended questions is to phrase them in terms of the student's needs, wishes, or desires; that is, instead of asking, "How can I help you?" or "What can I do for you today?" ask the student, "What do you want to talk about today?" or "What issues do you have about next semester?" Such questions will begin to help students understand that their role in the advising process is as important as their advisor's role. A simple method for developing the skill of using open-ended questions is to ask, "Can this question be answered in three words or less?" Closed-ended questions are best used to gather factual information only. Although it is often important to ask such questions in order to be sure that the facts are gathered, they can also serve to foreclose on dialogue instead of extending the conversation. Advisors must be aware of the types of questions they are asking because questions are clues to students that advisors are truly interested in the students' feelings and concerns. Open-ended questions indicate interest in the student; closed-ended questions indicate interest in only the facts.

Advisors apply communication and questioning skills as they utilize advising approaches. Students rely on advisors to help them think through difficult situations, solve problems, or decide on courses of action. They seek perspective that will help them not only understand the issues they face but also analyze and evaluate possible choices. However, advising remains a collaborative practice (chapter 12). Therefore, advisors must model and teach critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills in advising sessions.

Advising approaches provide frameworks for teaching and modeling critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making. Advisors who practice advising as teaching overtly and explicitly instruct students in these processes. They may use a number of advising approaches in a single session or for a particular student. For example, advisors may invoke prescriptive advising to outline the process for registering for the subsequent semester or declaring a major, then take a proactive approach to confront a potential problem and generate alternatives, and then switch to motivational interviewing to support the student in identifying and committing to behavioral modifications necessary to resolve the issue. The most appropriate approach depends on the student. As Jayne Drake noted in chapter 12, "By seeing the students in front of them, advisors understand and respond to student diversity and difference, and they adapt advising approaches based on an understanding of student development theory." Drake also observed that advising approaches, like advising, are based on "a shared responsibility for student learning and growth, with advisors challenging and supporting students." "Building relationships and encouraging this holistic development of all students are key elements in all of the . . . approaches" (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013, p. ix).

Referral Skills

Last, to develop a one-to-one advising relationship with students, advisors must use referral skills. Effective referral skills depend on an advisor's listening and questioning skills because the first step in referring a student is to determine the student's problems and issues. Advisors often make the mistake of referring students on the basis of the advisor's own feelings or views rather than clearly listening to the students or asking effective questions to determine what the students' problems or issues may be. When this is the case, students may see such referrals as only a method of getting them out of the advisor's office instead of as genuine desire to assist students in the best way possible.

The first and possibly most important step in effective referrals is for the advisor to explain clearly and in an open manner why the student should seek assistance from another source. The advisor and student must have jointly determined the problem for which assistance is needed and then formulated a plan of action that includes the referral. Demonstrating effective referral skills requires advisors to have a clear understanding of the services available on campus and in the community. In addition, advisors will be able to explain the type of assistance the student needs as well as the qualifications of the persons or agencies to whom the student is being referred. Advisors should take the time to visit and become acquainted with all areas of the campus that can support their students in order to be effective in the referral process.

An effective referral always includes the name, location, and if possible, telephone number and e-mail address of a contact person at the office or agency to which the student is being referred. To increase the likelihood of a successful referral, the advisor should assist the student by scheduling the appointment or by walking the student to the appropriate office. Finally, effective referrals include following up with students on the referrals and assistance they have received. If the situation warrants, the advisor should contact the student shortly after the appointment to discuss the referral and to determine if the student needs additional assistance. In other instances, the outcome of the referral can be discussed in the next advising session.

Advisors who work with data-based tools that flag referrals for automatic follow-up must familiarize themselves with the student management system at their institution. They should contact students to determine the extent to which they learned and benefited from referrals. Not only does this inquiry help the advisor learn the most helpful resources for a particular circumstance, but the extra communication gives students the opportunity to share insights that positively affected their situation. Furthermore, failure to follow up may send a message that that the referral was not important or that the advisor is uninterested in the student's progress.

Developing the interpersonal skills of effective listening, questioning [using multiple advising approaches], and referral is vital for advisors in order for one-to-one academic advising to be successful. Although it is important for advisors to know the academic programs or requirements or the curriculum of the institution, such knowledge alone will not provide students with the level of academic advising they need for success in their academic careers.

The One-to-One Academic Advising Session

Having knowledge of the institution's programs and requirements and developing effective interpersonal skills for communicating and assisting students are only part of the successful one-to-one academic advising relationship. The advising session or interview with the student is vital to the advising process. Often the best intentions and well-developed skills of advisors are overshadowed by their lack of attention to the advising session itself. The advisor must clearly understand the essential components of the advising session: planning and preparing for the session and the content and process of the session. [They must also demonstrate effective means of ending the appointment with appropriate summaries, collaborative goal setting, and documentation.]

Planning and Preparing for the Advising Session

The area in which most advisors fall short is planning and preparing for the advising session. The first step in planning is to understand that for many students scheduling an appointment with an advisor is something they may not do without the advisor taking some proactive measures. Successful advisors include the initiation of contact as a vital component of their work. Communicating with advisees on a regular and consistent basis is the first step they take when planning for advising sessions. This communication may take the form of personal letters, telephone calls, postcards, or e-mail messages [as well as communication management system tools]. Communication begins early in the advisor–advisee relationship and continues until students have reached their educational goals. The communication might be to invite the students in for a session, to congratulate them on some success, academically or personally, to check on their academic progress, or simply to keep in touch. Whatever the method of communication or the purpose behind it, the goal is to establish ongoing contact as the basis for a quality relationship.

Second, planning for an advising session with an advisee involves the advisor learning as much as possible about the student. The advisor reviews academic history, test scores, educational goals, and other information sources that might be available. An important source of information is advising notes from previous sessions. These notes are invaluable in helping to set the agenda or content of an advising session. They can also be used to remind the advisor of things that still need to be accomplished by either the advisor or the advisee. Advising notes are also extremely important if an institution has an advising center model in which students see different advisors for each session. An advisor must have the advising notes from the previous advisor in order to conduct an effective advising session with the student. In addition, many advisors send questionnaires to advisees for them to complete and return prior to their first advising session in order to get a clear picture of the students, their academic and personal strengths and weaknesses, and their goals. This step is not only done before the initial advising session, however. A successful advisor reviews the information on his advisees prior to all scheduled advising sessions.

Joe Cuseo (n.d.) encouraged advisors to have students complete a pre-conference intake form that includes students' answers to questions in six general areas: personal background, future plans, personal abilities or aptitudes, personal interests, personal values, and advising expectations. A sample of such a new student planning form, used at Cloud County Community College (n.d.), is included in the Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. In addition to giving advisors valuable information about their students, questionnaires or intake forms can increase the productivity of an advising session by enabling advisors to immediately address a student's concern or potential challenge.

Third, although spur-of-the moment advising sessions or advising-in-the-hall sessions are a part of the college environment, advisors should be proactive in stressing to students the importance of scheduling appointments in advance in order to provide the advisor with ample time to plan effectively for each session. This scheduling itself takes careful preparation. The advisor must have a clearly designated schedule for advising sessions that should be communicated to students each academic term. Again, this can be done through written communication, telephone calls, or e-mail messages as well as by posting a schedule on the advisor's door or in his or her office area. Appointment scheduling encourages students to plan and prepare for the advising session. If students must make appointments, they are less likely to walk in at the last minute expecting the advisor to make their decisions or solve their problems. Instead, they will arrive ready to play an active role in the advising session. However, this approach also requires advisors to have the courage and fortitude to reschedule appointments for drop-in students instead of dropping everything at the last minute to see a student. An advising session in which neither the advisor nor the student has had an opportunity to plan and prepare is limited in its productivity.

Fourth, the advisor must plan for uninterrupted time with the students during the advising session. Telephone calls should be put on hold or the phone should be taken off the hook. [Technology has contributed to the potential distractions: Advisors should disable pop-up messages, notification sounds, and other elements of e-mail and online communication systems.] Adequate time should be allowed for each appointment so that a student does not feel rushed. Also, the schedule should allow time for the advisor to make notes and take care of other actions that result from the advising appointment. In the busy environment of higher education institutions today, this is likely the most difficult part of planning for advising sessions. However, the effectiveness of any advising session is seriously jeopardized by not planning carefully to avoid interruptions, which suggest to the student that the session is not an important activity.

> Finally, prior to each advising appointment, advisors must clear their desks and their minds. A work space piled high with stacks of paper may convey that the advisee has interrupted the advisor or that the advisor is too busy to focus on them. As Peggy Jordan (2007; chapter 11) has noted, advisors distracted by other events, such as the traffic jam during their morning commute or with the pressing and difficult needs of the previous student, may seem distant or upset such that the student feels like an intruder (or worse).

To provide every student with a quality advising session, it is clearly the responsibility of the advisor to plan and prepare adequately. Although this may be the most time-consuming step, it sets the tone for all sessions and can determine whether a session is successful or not.

Content and Process of the Session

Once the session has been scheduled, the advisor then focuses on the session itself—on its content and process. It is desired that all advising sessions have a clear purpose when they are scheduled so that the advisor and the student both understand what will be discussed and can move into the content of the session smoothly. It is also clear, however, that in colleges today this is not always possible. Therefore, the advisor must focus on the session content on the basis of prior planning and preparation, while at the same time be sensitive to the student's concerns.

The first component of any advising session is developing or quickly reestablishing rapport with the student. While developing rapport is critical to the success of the initial advising session, it must also be done for each subsequent session. Although advisors may wish to jump quickly into the content of sessions, they must first take time to greet students by name and make them feel comfortable. This can be done by asking general questions about their well-being, family, or classes or by reviewing the content of the previous advising session. This component underscores the importance of planning and preparing for the session because an advisor must be familiar with students' backgrounds and goals in order to initiate rapport. Students must be made to feel comfortable at the beginning of each advising session if they are to work collaboratively with the advisor on the topics or issues addressed during the session. Many advisors often overlook this step, but it can truly make the difference between a successful session and an unsuccessful session.

It is important that advising sessions have a clear agenda or flow in order to be effective in assisting students. First, the advisor and student should discuss the previous advising session. This is the time to discuss the results of any referrals, the outcome of any actions taken, and the student's academic progress since the last session. The advisor and advisee then move to the purpose of the current advising session. It is essential that both parties be clear about the primary purpose of the session as well as look at any secondary or underlying issues. Next is discussion of the issues or concerns that the student has brought to the advising session. This is when the advisor's interpersonal skills will be most important. For example, the student may state that the purpose of the session is to discuss withdrawing from a class, but on the basis of the student's body language, tone, and facial expressions the advisor may determine that the issue is much more than withdrawing; instead, it may actually be financial problems, family problems, or other issues. It is also important during this stage in the advising session to discuss the issues and concerns of the advisor, which may range from academic policies and regulations to academic difficulties of which the advisor has been made aware by the advisee's instructors.

Closing the Session

Finally, the advisor should carefully conclude the advising session by taking time to summarize the discussion that has taken place and to outline any plans of action that have been developed.

> The advisor should close the session by asking the student if he or she has any final questions. In addition, as appropriate, the advisor may encourage the student to summarize decisions discussed and outline courses of action. To prompt, as necessary, for student articulation of their learning, advisors ask "What have we done today?" and "What are your next steps?" To reinforce the decision made, including those for action, students can send an e-mail of an appointment summary and action plans to themselves and the advisor. Some advisors use a student management system that automatically sends students a short evaluation of the appointment. Advisors should prepare students to receive this evaluation and encourage productive and constructive feedback that will improve all future advising sessions.

During the session, the advisor should make all appropriate referrals and assist the student in setting a time line for accomplishing any goals or plans. By failing to do this, an otherwise successful advising session may accomplish very little for the student or the advisor.

Finally, advisors must make notes about each advising session, preferably as soon as possible following the session. Advising notes document discussions, decisions, actions, and the student's reactions to key points made in the session. Good advising notes help the advisor follow up with students on unfinished business or referrals as well as prepare for subsequent advising sessions.

Advisor notes are considered educational records and thus subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and other laws and policies that regulate their disclosure. Guidelines put forth by Missouri State University (2014) offer excellent suggestions for documenting advising sessions. New advisors must talk to their supervisors to learn the protocol for safely keeping and appropriately sharing, if necessary, advising notes.

Conclusion

The successful one-to-one advising relationship can be a major factor in a student's decision to remain in college and be academically successful. One-to-one advising relationships must first be built of the advisor's development of the interpersonal skills of communication, questioning, and referral. During the advising session, advisors must use these interpersonal skills to assist their students. It is the advisor's responsibility to keep the conversation moving and on target; this may include carefully asking open-ended questions and focusing on analyzing students' verbal as well as nonverbal clues. Advisors must avoid the tendency to out-talk students by allowing them time to discuss issues before responding. The advisor must also focus on accepting students' attitudes and feelings about an issue; students recognize when advisors do not value their problems and concerns, and next time they will not be as willing to be honest and straightforward in the advising session.

Advisors must recognize the importance of planning and preparing for an advising session and then follow a clear plan of flow during the session. This flow must include a clear look at previous sessions, discussion of the present issues and concerns, and a distinct summary and follow-up plan for future actions and sessions. It is clear that one-to-one advising provides students and advisors with the opportunity to build lasting and valued relationships that will positively affect students' academic performance and satisfaction with the institution.

Aiming for Excellence

- Ask your supervisor or a colleague to observe your advising session with a student (with the student's permission) and to record the conference as closely as possible. What patterns emerge? Are you doing all the talking? Did you really listen to the student? Which advising approaches did you use? Should you have asked more clarifying or probing questions? Ask your supervisor or colleague for suggestions to improve your relational skills and expand your use of advising approaches.

- At the end of your first semester of advising, review your advising notes for students who you had referred to other offices or resources on campus. Did they take your suggestion and seek additional resources? What additional information or approach might better encourage students to take action on your suggestions?

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Applications and Insights

Conducting Individual Conferences
Pat Folsom

Prior to the Conference

- Clear your desk.
- Review the student's file.
- Organize resources and advising materials.
- Refocus from the task at hand or previous student.

Opening

- Meet the student in waiting area or outside your office.
- Disregard first impressions.
- Forget previous difficult advising situations.
- Initiate conversation with a positive, personal note.
- Smile: You may be the only adult the student runs into that day who is genuinely glad to see her or him.
- Use the student's name.
- Shake hands (if culturally appropriate).
- Early in the session follow up on a personal story or situation discussed in the previous appointment.
- Demonstrate attentiveness to the student's physical presence: "You look (tired, worried, happy, like the cat who swallowed the canary) today. What's up?"

Time Frames

- Establish the time frame for the appointment: "We have 20 minutes today. We must get you registered, but is there anything besides registration that's on your mind?" "I'd really like to be able to help you with that—let's make another appointment so we can really talk about it."
- Tell students when you are least busy and encourage them to stop by or make appointments during these times so you that you can devote more attention to their concerns.
- Follow up with e-mail assignments over the summer.

Conference

- Make a positive comment about the student or the student's progress in each conference.

- Explain the reason you are taking action or asking a question.
- Make sure the runaround or office-shuttle stops with you.
- Ask questions that elicit solid information.
  - Ease into the tough questions and issues: "Let's discuss prerequisite classes." Do not initiate this conversation with *you* language:
  - "Let's talk about your resistance to prerequisites" will put the struggling student on the defensive.
  - "Tell me about your current classes." Then, if a prompt is needed, introduce each class for discussion one by one.
  - To gauge the student's level of engagement, ask what he or she is reading and the assignments that are interesting.
  - "Tell me about how life is treating you." How is your relationship with your roommate(s)?"
  - "Money aside, parents aside, what would you, in your dreams, be doing?"
- Practice active listening.
  - Wait for the student to complete her or his question or thought before jumping in with a comment or response.
  - Restate or ask clarifying questions before responding to a student question or comment.
  - Appreciate and use periods of silence.
- Keep on track. "I'd like to come back to something you said. . . ."

Conclusion

- Summarize (or instruct the student to summarize) decisions and actions. Clarify the take-away message for the student for this appointment.
- Ask the student to write down any plans of action.
- Make sure all student concerns and questions have been considered (answered or given referral): "What question haven't we addressed today?" "Is there something else you would like to discuss?" End the conference on a positive, personal note.

Follow-Up

- Record notes from the advising session.
- Phone or send the student e-mail with information or answers to questions you promised them.
- Take a moment to note issues to cover at the student's next appointment.

Adapted with permission from Pat Folsom, Jennifer E. Joslin, and Franklin Yoder: From *Creating a Blueprint for Your First Year of Advising and Beyond* workshop conducted at NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advisors pre-conferences of the annual meetings from 2004 through 2007.

Applications and Insights

Creating a Welcoming Advising Atmosphere

- Make the office space comfortable and student friendly.
- Clear the desk and be ready for the conversation; do not remain knee-deep in other projects when the student arrives.
- Start and end on a positive, supportive note.
- Extend genuinely warm greetings (be the friendly face in a place that is not always friendly).
- Really listen.
- Look at the student when talking, but recognize that students from other cultures may feel uncomfortable with continual direct eye contact.
- Smile and ask a nonthreatening question.
- Refer to one item from the previous conference so that students know they are remembered and valued.
- Ask the student to express questions or concerns before launching into the advising agenda.
- Ask the advisee to help set the meeting agenda.
- Begin the conference by focusing on a positive; recognize student successes and use them as springboards to discuss areas for improvement.
- Note details that are important to the student (e.g., summer plans, significant event mentioned in passing) and ask about them in subsequent conversations.
- Use open-ended questions to keep the student an active participant.
- Learn each student's nickname. Ask about life outside of academics: recent trips, family, siblings, hometown, and fun activities.
- Use humor.
- Remember what it was like to be 18 years old.

Adapted with permission from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising: Folsom, P. (2007). Creating a welcoming advising atmosphere. In P. Folsom (Ed.), *The new advisor guidebook: Mastering the art of advising through the first year and beyond* (Monograph No. 16) (pp. 110–111). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.

Applications and Insights

Making the Most of Limited Time With Students
Pat Folsom, Jennifer E. Joslin, and Franklin Yoder

- Create guidelines for answering student e-mails. Determine which questions or actions can be answered by e-mail and which require a face-to-face meeting.
- Create standard messages for common questions (e.g., drop/add procedures).
- Create a standard template that can be personalized and sent to students on probation.
- Create standard e-mails for common student contacts and outreach (e.g., contacting no-shows, asking student to contact advisor, or requesting student to make an appointment).
- Create a to-do sheet for students to complete during their appointments. The sheet can include common referral offices and relevant contact information (it also acts as a checklist for information that needs to be covered in an appointment).
- Review student's electronic or paper file (conference notes, grade report, current registration) before the student arrives for an appointment.
- When using paper recordkeeping systems, use sticky notes as reminders of topics or issues that should be discussed with the student in the future.
- When a student phones, create an e-mail note. While talking to the student, summarize the conversation, including web site referrals and other specific information. After hanging up the phone, send the e-mail to the student. Cut and paste the summary into electronic notes (or print and add to paper notes).
- Create a personalized advisor to-do list.

New advisors must master and integrate a wide breadth of information at significant depth. By being organized, they can keep communication lines open, appointments focused, and advisees informed even while still growing in the new advising position.

Reprinted with permission from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising: Folsom, P., Joslin, J., & Yoder, F. (2007). Organizing the chaos: Organizing time with students. In P. Folsom (Ed.), *The new advisor guidebook: Mastering the art of advising through the first year and beyond* (Monograph No. 16) (pp. 54–55). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

TEACHING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Marsha A. Miller

In a key practice, advisors teach students to make good decisions (Steele, 2013, ¶2). Some people have never received instruction on making a decision; they just do it. As a result, some new advisors react with surprise when students approach them for help with the process. When confronted with a student struggling to decide, the wise advisor realizes that "the goal is not to just make a decision, but to learn how to make decisions" (Steele, ¶4).

Although some in academia think that students should have learned decision making long before they enter college, advisors need to recognize that some students have "never [been] allowed a part in the decision-making process" (Ellis, 2014, p. 45). For example, Ali explained to long-time advisor, Drew, that two of Ali's four roommates intended to move out of their shared apartment midway through the term; one is experiencing financial issues and the other is enrolling in a vocational program. After telling Drew about these developments, sharing worries over meeting the rent payment, and recanting reasons for declaring a pre-med major at summer enrollment, a panicked Ali concluded the narrative with the declaration: "Maybe I should move home too!" Drew quickly grasped that Ali's anxiety stemmed from the need to sort through layers of complexity and effectively make decisions.

Drew had read Virginia Gordon's (2007) chapter on undecided students and knew that advisors can teach the decision-making process by first ascertaining the strategies a student typically uses to make easy decisions (e.g., when and where to eat). Appreciating that a person's decision-making tactics can vary based on the nature of the choice, Drew recognized that Ali could quickly choose among mundane day-to-day options, but Ali's parents had always made the larger decisions, and in fact, had selected the pre-med major Ali had declared over the summer. Furthermore, they had expressed disappointment in the only key decision they had left to Ali: choice of roommates.

With some understanding of the process by which Ali made big and little decisions, Drew started to isolate and address the problematic issues. Drew implemented a systematic decision-making approach that includes eight steps:

1. Create a constructive environment.
2. Identify the issues.

3. Generate good alternatives.
4. Explore the alternatives.
5. Weigh the alternatives.
6. Help students to choose the best alternative.
7. Check the decision.
8. Communicate the decision. (Mind Tools, 2015, ¶5)

Drew had already created a welcoming, constructive, and nonjudgmental environment for discussions, and in this space, began asking Ali probing questions to identify the salient concerns and alternatives. Drew's questions and insights helped Ali organize the decision-making process and guard against skipping important steps. The pair identified two issues that needed prompt resolution: choice of housing and declaration of a suitable major.

After discussing alternatives, Ali realized that breaking the rent contract would create additional problems that could negatively affect future housing opportunities, so Ali opted to stay in the apartment and try to find other roommates to split the rent. Ali also decided to connect with the Financial Aid Office to research additional funding and check campus employment web sites. Furthermore, Ali chose to defend against any parental objections by first exploring all options before sharing the decision to stay in the apartment.

However, Ali's discussion about the parentally selected major revealed a more complicated state of affairs. By applying Norman E. Amundson's (2003) five lines of questioning (chapter 7), Drew actively listened to and gained a better understanding of Ali. Specifically, Drew dug into the ideas and beliefs that influenced the situation to discover that Ali's parents had chosen a pre-med major because an uncle makes good money as a practicing physician. However, Ali described quickly tiring of studying physical sciences, as was evidenced by a poor midterm grade in chemistry. With Drew's prompting, Ali described enjoyment in social science classes, such as psychology, and stated that, upon graduation, "I do not want to sit behind an office desk all day!"

Drew helped Ali make an appointment for career exploration and asked Ali to reiterate the steps to take before the meeting with the career advisor. Drew scheduled a follow-up session and also documented the career-meeting homework steps in an e-mail.

Three weeks later, Ali returned for the follow-up appointment and announced the finding of two new roommates and a part-time campus job. Ali's financial situation had improved, and the parental conversations about the apartment and the pre-med major had been productive. Furthermore, the career counseling session yielded four different career paths for Ali's further exploration: criminal justice, social work, marketing, and business management.

To advance the decision-making process, Drew suggested that Ali participate in thinking hats, an enlightening and creative activity described by The de Bono Group to help individuals having trouble weighing alternatives (n.d., ¶2). Specifically, Drew instructed Ali to picture white, yellow, black, red, and green hats (de Bono, n.d., ¶2) and then to mentally select the white (facts) hat to wear. Under the white hat and by accessing relevant materials, such as the course catalog and department web sites, Ali delineated information about each major under consideration.

Once the facts were listed, Drew asked Ali to don the yellow (optimistic) hat and explore the positives about each alternative major. Then Ali wore the black hat and played the devil's advocate, writing down the negatives for each study program alternative, including any poor outcomes possible from pursuing the related career.

Next Ali put on the red (intuition) hat and elaborated on the aspects of each major that felt like a good or poor fit. Finally, Ali put on the green (creativity) hat and considered the possibilities for each choice, including new avenues for personal or professional growth that could be created while studying or working in the chosen field.

By the time Ali finished trying on hats, one of the two business areas, marketing, looked most appealing. Drew and Ali subsequently explored course options.

The case of Drew and Ali illustrates that decision making can be stressful for advisees, but advisors can use proven decision-making tools to teach them ways to sort through a variety of vexing issues. At some point, all students make decisions that affect their scholastic and personal lives, but with the advisors' guidance in exploration, they learn to optimize their chances for making the best choices for their personal situation.

Aiming for Excellence

- In consultation with other advisors, list the problem-solving techniques and decision-making strategies that work best with students. Access applicable Clearinghouse resources at http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Critical-thinking-resource-links.aspx.
- Discuss with colleagues common problems that students present and strategies for resolving those issues.
- Several contributors to this book offer strategies germane to helping students develop decision-making, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. For example, Dorothy Burton Nelson (Chapter 7) discusses Gordon's (2006) 3-I model and Amundson's (2003) five lines of questioning. In addition, Jennifer Santoro and Misti Dawnn Steward, in Voices From the Field—Career Advising: A New Paradigm (following chapter 4), examine use of core desires in decision making. During your first three years, practice using each of these strategies. Which models or strategies do you employ most effectively? Do your strategies vary according to the student and situation? Keep a log of your reflections to help you hone your skill in using these strategies.

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Applications and Insights

Checklist of Questions: Teaching Students to Make Academic Decisions

Stephen O. Wallace and Beverly A. Wallace

To persist to graduation, students need to create clearly defined academic goals and acquire decision-making skills that support the achievement of those goals. Therefore, advisors must answer questions about available academic programs and graduation requirements. First-year advisors can anticipate questions such as:

- What degrees and certification programs are offered?
- What academic programs of study (major/minor/concentrations) are offered?
- Do programs accommodate students with earned high school dual credit?
  - nondegree seeking students?
  - adult students through degree completion?
  - students pursuing noncredit, continuing, and professional education?
- What are the graduation requirements?
- How many credit hours must be earned for graduation?
- What GPA is required to graduate?
- How many credits must be earned at the institution for graduation?
- How many credits does a major and minor require?
- How is the general education program organized and what policies are associated with it? How many credits are required to complete the general education program?
  - What options satisfy the general education categories?
  - Do any majors or minors require specific general education courses?
  - What is the minimum passing course grade to satisfy general education requirements?
- Is a minor required?
- Is a foreign language course required?
- What are free electives and do any count toward the program of study requirements?
- What noncourse requirements must be satisfied for graduation?

14

GROUP ADVISING

Donald Woolston and Rebecca Ryan

In preparation for this book, a review panel drawn from the NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising Publications Advisory Board, New Advising Professionals Commission, and Faculty Advising Commission closely examined the first edition of The New Advisor Guidebook: Mastering the Art of Advising Through the First Year and Beyond *(Folsom, 2007). They give high reviews to the chapter on group advising contributed by Donald Woolston and Rebecca Ryan (pp. 119–123). The climate within which group advising is practiced has changed since 2007. Advisors choose from more delivery options such as one-to-one, group, and multiple forms of online venues. In addition, regional accreditation agencies require student learning outcomes for all areas including advising. This chapter, with its foundational approach to group advising—the concept, components, characteristics, and challenges—remains relevant. It is reprinted with permission and without change. In the subsequent chapter, Rebecca Ryan examines group advising within the current higher education climate.*

The practice of group advising is growing both in importance and frequency. Clearly, the group advising model is closer to teaching and further from counseling than is one-on-one advising, and it is a proven, effective way to meet some of the traditional goals of academic advising. The reasons to conduct group advising and some effective means of leading group sessions are offered.

Carried out the right way and for the right reasons, group advising is effective and has great potential to benefit students and advisors. When advisors are faced with large advising caseloads, it offers a pragmatic alternative to traditional one-on-one conferences, allowing advisors to present necessary general information in a group setting and freeing advisor time in individual conferences for developmental advising (see [Ryan & Woolston, 2007]; Silverson & Bentley-Gadow [2007]).

Nearly every school and college on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus offers group advising. In some units, group meetings are conducted as a follow-up to orientation for new students; in others, they take place before registration to convey

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key curriculum pointers and reminders. Because of the trend toward group advising, we predict that new advisors most likely will encounter group advising opportunities in their careers. The guidelines and information presented in this article are designed to make those opportunities positive and productive experiences for both students and advisors.

Understanding Group Advising

Group advising is an advising model in which a knowledgeable person leads a group of students toward a better understanding of common educational requirements, policies, and procedures as well as the relevant strategies for completing them. The group advising model is closer to teaching, more information focused, and further from counseling than is one-on-one advising. New advisors who have experience with classroom teaching will find it natural; those with training in counseling may not be as comfortable as their teaching peers.

Group advising is most effective under the following conditions:

- Advisors are knowledgeable and able to field a wide range of questions, present information clearly, and facilitate group discussion.
- Students have a common set of requirements. For example, group advising might be used to orient new students to major requirements or collegiate or university policies and procedures, prepare students for registration, provide information on study abroad or internship opportunities, or prepare students for the graduation process.
- The campus culture reflects an appreciation of advising. Students must view advisors and advising as useful. If a campus lacks a culture in which advising is valued, an advisor can hold the group meetings, and even require students to come, but he or she will be dealing with intractable groups of annoyed students, and little useful advising will take place. In a campus climate where students do not read their e-mail, do not open their posted mail, and do not frequent the same set of buildings and walk by the same bulletin boards, group advising might not work.

The successful group-advising model does not eliminate one-on-one advising. In a model similar to that for advising and registration during student orientation programs, crucial information that applies to all students is presented in small group settings, and individually relevant information is delivered through traditional one-on-one advising as needed.

To advisors who have conducted summer orientation advising, the group advising process may look familiar. Advisors need to think about the preparation and process of summer orientations that might apply to programs offered throughout students' academic careers. A step-by-step guide for creating a group advising session is presented in . . . [Applications and Insights—The Group Advising Session: A Step-by-Step Guide at the end of this chapter].

Characteristics of Effective Group Advising Sessions

Not all proceedings of a meeting between a group of students and an advisor constitute good advising practice. A perfunctory effort to follow the step-by-step guide in . . . [Applications and Insights—The Group Advising Session: A Step-by-Step Guide] will not ensure that the goals for the meeting will be met. Best practices are based on thoughtful planning and efficacious processes. They include the following:

- extensive and timely notification. Advisors should use all means available, including e-mail, bulletin boards, residence hall personnel, instructors, student newspapers, and Listservs to inform advisees about the meeting. Reminders should go out within a week of the session dates and again on the days of the meetings.
- thorough preparation. For some reason, "I don't know" is better accepted in an individual appointment with a student than in response to a question in front of a large group. Making up a specious answer is not a solution for addressing a confounding question; instead, being prepared for a wide range of questions is absolutely imperative. Therefore, new advisors may want to observe or assist at group advising sessions and field questions from one-on-one conferences before trying to conduct a session by themselves.
- engaging materials. Handouts are essential: Students need concrete and tangible resources to follow during the meeting and for reference when they return home. Materials should be clear, concise, and visually interesting. Worksheets (e.g., trial class schedules) should be accompanied by very clear instructions.
- a clear agenda. The advisor's name, contact information, and meeting agenda should be prominently displayed during the meeting. The documented agenda helps the advisor stay on task and conveys to students the plan and important substance of the session.
- time for questions from the group. Even with thorough preparation, an advisor will not be able to discern in advance all possible questions. Do not ask students to break in with questions because they typically will not be comfortable interrupting the presentation. Likewise do not wait until the end to ask for questions because time may expire. Instead, pause frequently and ask, "Now, what's on your mind?"
- time for questions from individuals. At the end of the group meeting, the presenter should expect a queue of students with questions that are too personal or specific for them to ask in the group setting. If the session is close to the advising office, the advisor can bring students back to the office and individually

meet with each. If the office is nowhere near the group session, she or he should try to create a little space so that students waiting in line will not overhear discussions with other students. Handling these postsession questions will test a new advisor's ability to quickly and accurately assess each student's situation, ask key questions, and provide an appropriate answer.

- help. Assistants can distribute handouts as well as collect forms and sign-in sheets. They also can help answer student questions. The more students in the session, the more questions will be asked. One person can run a group meeting of 50 students or even more, but that one person cannot answer all the individual questions that such a meeting will generate. A cadre of peer advisors or help from colleagues (e.g., copresenters) can be a huge benefit.
- encouragement for students to follow up. In ideal group advising, many subsequent one-on-one appointments will be generated, but not one for every student. Many follow-up questions from students will come in the form of e-mails or even instant messaging contacts. The advisor should be sure that the advising appointment schedule allows for students who attended the meeting and subsequently want to confer via e-mail or appointment. Students will be discouraged if they follow up on an invitation only to discover that their advisor has no time available to meet with them.
- evaluation and feedback. Every student should leave with a handout. In addition, they should leave their names and student numbers with their advisor. These could be collected on a sign-in sheet or forms completed in the meeting. For example, if the group session is focused on preparation for registration, advisors might ask students to write down their course choices for the upcoming semester. This gives advisors the opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of the session and to catch and prevent potentially poor academic choices. As an alternative means to determine the information that students learned and the plans they will make as a result of group advising, advisors may have participating students evaluate the session.

Group Advising: Benefits for Students and Advisors

Experience with group advising can be an exciting part of a new advisor's career growth. It can provide insights into student behavior and choices. It works well for students too.

Benefits for Students

Group advising can open communications between advisors and advisees, ultimately increasing student participation in one-on-one conferences. All students are accustomed to a classroom setting; however, even via the ubiquitous and utilitarian e-mail, many students find connecting with an advisor to be intimidating. Other advisees find walking into an adult's office as foreign or intimidating as entering a skateboard park would be to their advisors! Even if advisors create a warm, welcoming atmosphere, some students will still feel uneasy about crossing that office threshold.

Other students may not be intimidated but are sincerely convinced that their advisor does not have time for nor interest in their issues. Especially during busy advising periods, advisors may experience students who begin with "I know you are really busy, but . . ." and who end the meeting with "Thanks for your time."

After intimidated or anxious students show up to a group meeting and find out that their advisor has just one head, reasonably normal socialization, and a sincere interest in their welfare, everything changes. Without that group meeting, some advisees would never have made the advising connection. The safe environment offered by group advising may be especially helpful for student populations with special needs. For example, international students, especially those with marginal English skills and unfamiliarity with the American higher-education system, may appreciate the chance to soak up information in a group session so that they need not worry about formulating properly worded questions or finding the best place to ask questions. Even students without language barriers may not know how to talk to an advisor, and academically at-risk students may be the least likely to come to one-on-one advising sessions. Perhaps a struggling student fears that the advisor will be disappointed or angry with him or her. Perhaps the advisee feels alone in the situation.

For students hesitant to approach an advisor, group meetings offer both the power and safety of peers. As international, introverted, or struggling students hear peers ask questions or receive resolutions to their problems, they realize that not only are they not alone in their concerns but that advisors are approachable and helpful. From that point, many of these reluctant students are empowered to take advantage of the full range of advising opportunities, including one-on-one advising.

In summary, advising models are like academic support models. Just as many students prefer study groups to individual tutoring, perhaps because they do not feel comfortable admitting that they do not have answers or know the questions to ask, many advisees will initially prefer to attend group sessions instead of individual advising meetings.

Benefits for Advisors

Through group sessions, advisors quickly gain a big picture perspective on the common concerns and problems of students. Group meetings give advisors information that allows them to improve future group sessions, improve individual advising appointments, and advocate for students by providing feedback on student concerns to appropriate departments and central administration.

Group advising also offers advisors the opportunity to engage in advising as teaching with the group session agenda serving as the course syllabus. Group sessions afford advisors an effective means for setting advising expectations for students as well as demonstrating the treatment that students might expect of advisors. The likely outcomes are better informed advisees and individual advising appointments that focus on crucial individual differences and unusual concerns.

Perhaps just as important to advisors, group advising can remove some of the monotony that advisors otherwise might experience from repeating the same basic information 10 times on the same day. A bored advisor cannot be an effective advisor.

Group Advising: Challenges and Pitfalls

As experienced advisors who have conducted both group and individual advising over many years, we are aware that group advising has special challenges for a new advisor. Specifically, the advisor must develop presentation skills, learn to handle negative groups, deal with time pressures, and encourage attendance.

Presentation Skills

Few if any advisors have public-speaking skills in their job description, but oratorical proficiencies are required when faced with group advising assignments. Eye contact, voice projection, animation, stage presence, and clear diction are crucial to the group advising mission. Observing more experienced advisors leading group advising sessions and thinking about effective classroom presentations will help the new advisor develop the necessary presentation skills.

Negative Group Dynamics

Especially when advising is mandatory, students can show up with nasty attitudes. In his 2004 contribution to *The Mentor*, Patrick Lynch told an engaging story about the trials of working with an uncooperative small group. The students' general ungraciousness created a tension that was punctuated by a particularly brazen student making cellphone calls during the session! Public speaking experts know, and advisors soon learn, that the session leader cannot counter ugly behavior with retaliatory remarks. Instead, humor, respect, and professionalism are the only ways to address rudeness and disrespect.

Time Pressure

After being in the business for a while, advisors will notice that eventually every good advisor becomes a busy advisor. Group advising adds to this phenomenon. After standing in front of a group of students and demonstrating knowledge, empathy, and availability, an advisor's calendar will fill up quickly. Advisees and even their friends who have heard good reports of the advising session will want to make appointments for one-on-one sessions.

Student Attendance

If students do not attend group sessions, then time and resources are wasted. However, regardless of the publicity offered, only three means compel students to show up to the meetings. In one method, attendance is made mandatory so that registration holds are only removed after students have signed into a session. The second way to ensure attendance is to refuse students individual appointments until they have attended a group advising session. The third method is to make clear that the meetings are a very good time investment. After 10 years of working out the logistics, the advising staff at the University of Wisconsin–Madison has found an effective combination of these tactics.

Summary: Group Advising as Teaching

If group advising sounds a little like education in general, it should, because indeed it (as well as one-on-one advising) is about student learning. Group advising has limitations and is more difficult to carry out effectively than one might think, but the payoff, we believe, is very probable. The likely outcomes are better informed advisees and more effective individual advising appointments where advisors and advisees can focus on crucial individual and unusual concerns rather than common information that applies to most students. We are quite sure that a new advisor will eventually encounter group advising opportunities and that the information in this essay will help her or him be effective in that role.

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Applications and Insights

The Group Advising Session: A Step-By-Step Guide
Donald Woolston and Rebecca Ryan

1. Reserve rooms of the correct size well in advance of the advising session.
2. Notify students of upcoming registration dates and advising expectations (mass e-mails, posters, direct mailings, and web site announcements). Publish a list of group meetings. Make clear whether the meetings are required or optional.
3. Prepare handouts: curriculum guides, worksheets, and so forth.
4. Draft an agenda to guide the meeting.
5. Make or procure necessary forms (e.g., session evaluation and course selection forms).
6. Invite peer advisors or colleagues who may be willing to help.
7. Welcome the students as they arrive and thank them for their participation. Encourage their questions during as well as after the meeting.
8. Create a sign-in sheet if meetings are required. Students can sign in as they enter or leave the session.
9. Go through the agenda, pausing frequently for questions and carefully monitoring the group for signals that students may have questions or do not understand the information.
10. Ask for questions from the group. Be patient, but do not demand responses. If no questions are forthcoming, review points that experience has shown to be especially confusing. With some luck, a student will ask about a particular course, and other students can be asked to share their knowledge about the course (a collaborative process that cannot be conducted during one-on-one advising).
11. Leave time for individual questions; thank the group again for attending. Ask them to complete the evaluation form or hand in other forms completed during the session.
12. Make clear how students make appointments for follow-up one-on-one advising meetings.
13. Patiently answer individual questions. If time is too short to allow detailed explanations, give a quick answer and encourage individual students to make appointments for a detailed discussion of the topic.

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15

GROUP ADVISING

AN UPDATE

Rebecca Ryan

Since the publication of the first edition of The New Advisor Guidebook *(Folsom) in 2007, multiple forms for advising delivery have emerged and are utilized in whole or in combination, such as one-to-one, group, and electronic (e-mail, Skype, and so forth). Additionally, those practicing advising and working in higher education have embraced student learning outcomes as means to drive the creation and implementation of advising activities and delivery systems. The evolution of their practice toward specific learning goals has validated a trend toward a more intentional and strategic consideration of the many ways advisors educate and support students. Furthermore, practitioners have embraced and scholars have researched multiple formats of student engagement to promote retention. This updated chapter addresses these issues.*

Every student interaction creates a positive opportunity for advisors to engage students in the educationally purposeful activities so critical to student success (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005). Just as they master multiple approaches to effectively meet student needs (Drake, Jordan, & Miller, 2013; chapter 12), advisors must also master multiple ways of delivering advising. Group advising offers advisors an additional venue to the one-to-one appointment for engaging students, and through thoughtful discussions, those facilitating groups promote personal growth for participants. Therefore, new advisors should consider group advising as a useful way to reach advisees, teach them the importance of advising, and help them meet the student learning outcomes (SLOs) that contribute to their academic success.

Because new advisors, especially those without classroom teaching experience, may feel less comfortable conducting group advising sessions than working one-to-one with advisees, this chapter provides key information on facilitating positive and productive group advising sessions. To benefit from the suggestions, advisors need only a willingness to explore this advising option.

Benefits of Group Advising

Benefits for Advisors

Advisors who facilitate groups can proactively provide access, support, and information for students at key touch points during an academic cycle: for example, during orientation, while adjusting to campus, through enrollment, at drop and withdrawal deadlines, and upon preparing to go home over break. They also make intentional plans for SLOs or create an advising curriculum to meet the needs of their students. Even for those without large caseloads or stifling scheduling constraints, use of group advising can maximize advisors' time and ensure that commonly needed information is presented consistently to students. For example, advisors of pre-med students can focus individual sessions more productively after all the advisees who need the information have been introduced to the complex undergraduate requirements.

Just as advising must reach individuals in a meaningful way, the delivery must fit the unique attributes of the advisor, and some practitioners may discover that their relational strengths align more closely with group than one-to-one advising. Those who feel most comfortable with the content, format, and delivery of information within groups can tweak the group format to address a variety of student learning styles.

Benefits for Students

In addition to creating a safe environment (Woolston & Ryan, 2007, p. 121; chapter 14), well-executed group advising encourages the building of community. In *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (2001), Richard Light stated that "to learn from one another, students with different backgrounds and from different racial and ethnic groups must interact" (p. 190). Also pointing to the value of diversity, Nancy King (2000) noted that "students who participate in group advising appreciate the opportunity to interact with peers as well as with an advisor. The feeling of connectedness is a powerful by-product of the group experience" (p. 236).

The benefits of group advising accrue only when groups are implemented and facilitated effectively. Advisors can use a simple three-step process to create effective advising groups: identify advising SLOs, determine the most effective means of achieving these outcomes (e.g., advising one-to-one, in groups, or electronically), and planning for and creating group advising sessions.

Setting the Stage for Group Advising

Start With Goal Setting

Group advising requires thoughtful and thorough planning for SLOs; however, regardless of the specific objectives, some proven strategies help advisors ensure that group sessions meet advising goals and create positive and engaging experiences for students. For successful implementation of these strategies, advisors begin with the end in mind (Covey, 2013); that is, they identify a clear purpose for advising and their own objectives for practice. Many advising units have established mission statements and SLOs that guide practice. Those without this kind of reference will need to identify the desired session results or SLOs from their advising interactions. Advisors will later use these SLOs to develop an advising curriculum or syllabus for students that they can use in either one-to-one or group advising sessions. In developing these goals, advisors need to pose the following questions:

- What do I want students to know, do, and value as a result of advising (NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, 2006)?
- How are the outcomes currently being met (or not)?
- How can I structure advising opportunities and access (content, format, and times) to best help students achieve the desired SLOs?

New advisors should begin this exploratory process by reflecting on the basic information students need and then identify three to five points of knowledge or skills that a student should demonstrate as a result of advising. As they gain experience, advisors can add more SLOs to their curriculum. Advisors should formulate the specific goals that relate to SLOs.

After advisors work through the complex task of determining key SLOs, they need to examine current advising practices and activities to determine the means and timing by which students achieve the identified SLOs. The information in Table 15.1 serves as a good example for this part of the advising planning process. SLOs are listed in the left-hand column of the table, and advising activities that contribute to the stated SLOs are listed horizontally across the table.

As they complete the table, advisors must consider advising activities for the entire year. In the process, they identify points in time for implementing activities and meeting students' most common informational needs. In addition, advisors use the table to examine the established patterns and address the following questions:

- Do students have sufficient advising opportunities to satisfy SLOs?
- Are all SLOs addressed within current advising practices?

Table 15.1. Learning outcomes for knowledge and their sources

	Source for Achieving Learning Outcome					
Learning Outcome	**One-to-One Appointments**	**Orientation & Information**	**Web Site**	**E-mail**	**Facebook**	**Student Peers**
Knowledge Gained From Advising						
Reasons to see advisor		X	X			X
Ways to contact advisor		X	X		X	X
The basic nature of academic expectations	X	X	X			
How to use the enrollment system	X	X		X		X
Skills Gained From Advising						
Proactively seek advisor			X		X	X
Explore course options and make selections	X					X
Engage in extracurricular experiences*	X		X	X	X	X

Note. *Skill-building extracurricular experiences include community service, internships, jobs, study abroad opportunities, student organizations, and so forth.

- Are the current formats for delivering services (e.g., one-to-one, group, electronic, oral, written) the most effective?
- When are the peak demands on my advising time and how can I maximize advising engagement opportunities during these periods?
- Are new technologies and alternative ways of providing advising accessible to all?

As they consider ways to ensure that advising efficiently maximizes opportunities to address SLOs, advisors need to remember that students belong to a larger campus culture and likely have multiple opportunities to engage in activities that also address SLOs and encourage their development, such as first-year interest groups, living-learning communities, residence hall workshops, first-year experience courses, and student leadership programs, as well as service learning and community service commitments. Therefore, advisors need not offer or plan all meaningful opportunities, which frees them to focus on the unique contributions that they can bring to students. Having completed a thorough review of the goals and available means of supporting SLOs, advisors can determine the most effective delivery of advising (e.g., one-to-one, in groups, or electronic format).

Selecting a Means of Delivery

The review of possible venues informs planners considering group advising topics and settings. Those facing time or space restrictions may find the following factors particularly important in creating and implementing advising delivery formats:

- advisor professional preferences and skills. What are the advisor's strengths: technology use? public speaking? event planning?
- student population and student culture. What are the students' preferences for receiving, processing, and discussing information? Does the advisee or group present unique partialities or needs? For example, do they share status as international, first-generation, or adult students?
- efficiency. What topics are more effectively and timely delivered one-to-one, electronically, or through a group session? As Donald Woolston and Rebecca Ryan (2007, p. 119; chapter 14) asked, do the students face a common set of academic requirements, policies, or procedures (e.g., transfer articulation), or do they need information on a common topic (e.g., career readiness)? A group advising session offers an ideal venue for advisors who have developed an advising syllabus and curriculum for students who all need similar information within an identical time frame (e.g., orientation).
- SLOs for advising. Which SLOs and content might be addressed best in an experience outside of an individual appointment? For example, upper-level students who need baseline information about considering, exploring, choosing,

and applying to graduate programs may benefit from the broad, initial information offered in a group setting, which frees up one-to-one advisor appointments for specifically focusing on a student's unique situations, interests, goals, and so forth.

Creating Effective Group Advising Sessions

The creation of groups requires logistically and conceptually complex planning. Advisors need to commit a moderate investment of time in organizing and preparing to implement groups with the potential to deliver maximum student learning potential. In addition to securing support from the unit supervisor or administration head, advisors should address the following questions during the planning process:

- When do students need the information? Effective sessions offer advising when students perceive a need for the information. For example, a session designed to prepare students to register should be scheduled a week or two before enrollment, not months before students can contextualize the information.
- What personnel are involved? New advisors may feel more comfortable copresenting with an experienced colleague, and some veteran advisors invite experts from career centers or international student offices to offer sessions on specific opportunities such as internships and study abroad. Other campus partners, such as those in the career center or disabilities services, may share goals and SLOs with advising units, making them natural choices for guest presenters.
- Is the location of the session accessible to everyone? Best practices include consideration for those who may experience barriers to attendance. Obstacles are often unique to an institution's mission and student population. For example, when selecting the space, the planner must consider building location: Is it on or off campus? Is parking available? Is the location conducive to the group topic and expected attendees? Is the facility accessible to those with physical disabilities? Advisors should visit the designated space to ensure that those using wheelchairs can maneuver comfortably, and they need to make sure that advisees with sight or hearing disabilities can engage with the advising materials.
- Do the content and format of the materials sufficiently vary to accommodate different student development issues and learning styles of the group participants?
- Will the content and format effectively allow students to meet the determined SLOs?
- Does the session reflect the advising mission and philosophy embraced by the institution, the unit, and the advisors involved?

- Who can help with the planning and implementation of advising groups? Advisors in small units or sole practitioners should seek out campus colleagues who work with groups (e.g., admissions counselors, orientation staff, residence hall staff) or who hold similar advising positions elsewhere on campus to brainstorm ideas and discuss strategies for creating and facilitating groups. Membership in an advising organization offers opportunities for collaboration. For example, NACADA brings advising colleagues from all over the world to create useful publications and personal networks of advisors.
- What feedback will come from students? Students' positive and negative comments about their group advising experience provide advisors with insights about the extent to which SLOs have been met (or not).

Although characteristics of effective group advising reflect ongoing experiences of advisors in groups that meet in a physical space, many of the considerations apply to groups facilitated online. The technology emergence since the last *Guidebook* (Folsom, 2007) was published offers advisors a wide range of new options for creating an online curriculum and advising groups. For example, students studying in different countries need to complete their course equivalency forms for their home campus after they have started their abroad courses. Students needing to undergo a similar process, regardless of destination country, benefit from support and FAQs provided via a live, shared web chat as well as asynchronously to accommodate time zone differences. In addition, advisors can use student databases to sort students by major, year, or other characteristics, such as internship and scholarship recipients, to form groups.

Advisors directing online groups gain the same benefits—efficiency, variety, consistency, information about students, and teaching opportunity—offered by facilitating in-person advising. That is, advisors can disseminate common information online to students so that they can focus on each individual's goals and growth during private (in-person or online) sessions as well as provide information at key points over time to build on previously presented material.

In addition, information available at all times via the Internet meets students' expectations for round-the-clock access. Endres and Tisinger (2007) acknowledged this growing student preference for alternative information outlets and proposed that advisors embrace technology and utilize it in positive ways. Advising on demand involves technology (web sites, podcasts, videos) that makes important information always accessible to students.

Furthermore, advisors can use in-person and online groups to ease student anxieties prior to an individual meeting (Endres & Tisinger, 2007). For example, international students can read and learn information at their own pace without concerns about misunderstanding the advisor's oratory or formulating a spoken response. Furthermore, online groups can assist students in generating camaraderie; many students now bring with them a long history of interacting with technology to connect with others.

New advisors considering online advising groups should still work through the three-step process discussed: identifying advising SLOs, determining the most effective means of achieving these outcomes, and planning and creating the online groups. They also will find chapter 16, Advising Online, helpful as they plan and design advising delivery.

Summary

By conceptualizing advising delivery as an opportunity for student engagement, advisors consider new methods, tools, and approaches for meeting student needs and demands for advising as effectively as possible. The effort encourages a thoughtful process essential for best advising practice. New advisors soon recognize that learning transpires in multiple settings and through many approaches, including group advising. They attend to building new skills (e.g., public speaking) and careful planning, driven by SLOs, to create engagement opportunities that stimulate student curiosity and self-awareness. Many will realize that "experience with group advising can be an exciting part of a new advisor's career growth" (Woolston & Ryan, 2007, p. 121; chapter 14).

Aiming for Excellence

- Go on the campus tour for prospective students and make note of the questions they ask. Consider ways the information disseminated and the communication techniques used by the tour guide and other participants may apply to students attending a group advising session.
- Identify three to five simple concepts or facts a student should know as a result of advising. For example, "I want advisees to know the best way to follow up with me (e-mail, phone, etc.)" or "I want students to understand how to read their degree audit report."
- Find two or three other campus units with similar or identical learning goals for students and determine the content issues shared among you. Talk with colleagues from those departments to see if a group advising session could fulfill the need for all units. Specifically discuss both topics and format.
- Create a rough outline or syllabus that represents the academic year. Include group sessions that meet the needs of your students across different advising seasons and make note of student awareness about the different ways to access advising and other pertinent information. Consider ways to keep advisees informed and updated about all advising opportunities.

- Create a list of the top five most commonly asked questions in your one-to-one advising appointments and think about ways to address these inquiries within a group setting.
- Attend, as a guest, other group sessions (advising and non-advising) on campus, such as those offered by personnel in career or student support services, the graduate school staff, tour guides, and leaders of academic clubs and organizations. Make notes on the meetings and identify the formats and strategies that engaged the participants or audience.
- Use advising notes or confer with colleagues to develop questions that students with little experience at the institution or in the community (e.g., first-generation or international students) may not think to ask. Focus on common issues that could be addressed in a group advising setting.

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16

ADVISING ONLINE

Jeanette Pellegrin

A successful advising experience often inspires a student to reach his or her academic goal, whether it be a degree, a higher GPA for entry into a program, or a resharpening of a rusty skill. Traditionally, advisors have worked one-to-one and face-to-face with students in an office or advising center on a campus during the once-typical Monday-through-Friday work week (from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. in the United States), but increasingly advisors and advisees alike see this traditional schedule as obsolete. As education and the world become increasingly digitized, the advising experience must also reflect the Information Age.

Today, most college students demonstrate proficiency in communicating electronically. According to the Pew Internet Project (2014a, 2014b), persons of traditional college age use social networking sites, particularly on mobile devices, more than others in the U.S. population. Students maintain social and professional networks through e-mails, texts, blogs, and various social media. They not only are accustomed to sending, receiving, and processing information electronically but also expect to have access and utilize these means of connection at will; that is, they expect to initiate communication at their convenience—any time of the day or night and any day of the week.

The Community College Research Center (CCRC) (2012a) at Columbia University maintains that effective advising must include "sustained one-on-one interaction between the student and the advisor . . . not merely in the first semester but throughout the college career" (p. 61), and certainly most advisors would agree. To maintain the necessary level of interaction, advisors connect with their students electronically at some point whether they share the same physical campus environment or not. In fact, some advisors work with students who live hundreds or thousands of miles away from the college campus, making traditional methods of advising impossible. Although in an ideal situation advisor and student connect through a combination of in-person and electronic communication, this circumstance does not always materialize. Advisors and advisees may maintain a relationship without the two ever meeting in person or hearing one another's voice.

Online advising encourages more efficient information dissemination than does the traditional session in which the advisor in face-to-face consultation with the student relies heavily on spoken conversations and printed handouts of program requirements, deadlines, and referrals to departments and buildings elsewhere on campus. In addition, as most experienced advisors know, "pre-engaged students who arrive prepared for advising sessions are, unfortunately, not the norm" (Ambrose & Ambrose, 2013, ¶75), and online advising can drastically reduce or even eradicate the problem of readiness because advising through electronic means, such as e-mail, allows for communication at a time when the student can most appreciate and learn from the information received from the advisor. For example, a student distracted by concerns over an upcoming test may not focus on scholarship information presented in an appointment prescheduled an hour before the exam, but may benefit from an e-mail that she or he can open when able to devote the proper attention to the information in it.

In the past, online advising was seen as a disadvantage based on the belief that creating a relationship between advisor and student via the Internet poorly substituted for the face-to-face interaction. However, electronic communication provides some distinct advantages not found in the typical in-person advising scenarios. For example, it gives both parties the opportunity to review responses and edit them for tone, scrubbing out inflammatory words and choosing more neutral ones if necessary. In addition, unlike in a spoken conversation, a response need not be immediate; instead, the advisor can carefully check for facts, and the student enjoys "more time to carefully consider and provide more detailed, thoughtful reflections than [he or she can] in a face-to-face environment" (Ambrose & Ambrose, 2013, ¶76).

Arguably, the absence or presence of visual cues constitutes the most important difference between traditional and online advising. A meeting with a student face-to-face usually allows the advisor to process visual and auditory information about the student, which in turn provides cues on gender, sex, ethnicity, nationality, age, and so forth, but an advisor working online often must rely solely on information gleaned through a combination of demographic information in the institutional database and written responses from the student. Although this lack of initial information may mean the advisor must do a little more homework in getting to know the student, the likelihood of bias may also be reduced. Sometimes not knowing a student's profile relative to the traditional student for a certain program, for example, can prove advantageous (chapter 10).

If the lack of visual cues becomes problematic, a vast array of electronic communications, such as Skype and Facebook, can provide an interface in real time. The advisor and student need only agree on which system to use.

Online advising may require a new mind-set and different approaches for an advisor to embrace. However, as Peggy Jordan pointed out in chapter 11, "Excellence in advising comes from minds open to new ideas, including about oneself, as well as about students." For this mode of engaging and informing students, advisors must know how to organize, prioritize, and personalize the student's online advising experience.

Organizing

Conceptualizing the Goal

Regardless of whether the advising is undertaken in a traditional face-to-face format or via electronic means, the purpose remains the same: to help the student reach his or her goal. Therefore, before all other efforts, both parties must understand the goal.

During the process of obtaining a goal statement, the advisor must ask: "Why is the advising undertaken electronically?" Is the use of electronic media at this point in the advising relationship mandated by the school or predicated by the type of program delivery?

If it is the student's choice, does the online format provide the desired convenience or privacy not afforded by an appointment in person? If the student indicates such a reason for online advising, a discussion of workload, jobs, and scheduling might be appropriate early in the relationship. A student who says "I don't have time" to meet with an advisor or who exhibits discomfort meeting face-to-face may be giving warning signals that the advisor needs to explore.

Although advisors need to accept that some students request to be advised online simply for the sake of convenience, they must wonder if the student thinks that only electronic media provide viable options for advising. Such a position gives the advisor information on which to base questions about distance learning, disabilities, special needs, and so forth. Donald Woolston and Rebecca Ryan's discussion in chapter 14 on the advantages of group advising reveals the reason some students prefer being advised online, at least initially: The "safe environment" provided by electronic communication

> may be especially helpful for student populations with special needs. For example, international students, especially those with marginal English skills and unfamiliarity with the American higher-education systems, may appreciate . . . that they need not worry about formulating properly worded questions or finding the best place to ask questions. Even students without language barriers may not know how to talk to an advisor, and academically at-risk students may be the least likely to come to one-on-one advising sessions.

Beginning the advising relationship electronically can help dismantle some barriers to communication.

If the advisor chose the mode of communication, he or she must ascertain the student's comfort level with being advised electronically; that is, does the student possess the comfort and skill with technology needed to participate adequately in advising through the Internet? Discussing academic goals and progress can induce enough stress for students without adding concerns over technology to the situation. The advisor must clarify the chosen method of delivery and determine whether it will be the only method utilized. For a productive advising relationship, both parties must know the best ways to communicate both for typical concerns and especially during crises.

Establishing the Contract

A new advisor must be especially careful to establish the student's reason for seeking (or sometimes being forced to seek) advising. Advisors working online engage with representatives of special populations, whose reason for taking college classes may vary widely from each other and the majority cohort of the campus. From the first communication, the advisor must determine the purpose of advising for the student. The new advisor needs to also reflect on ways the mode of delivery, in this case electronic, affect her or his advising goals.

As with face-to-face advising, the expectations, rights, and responsibilities of both the advisor and the student must be clarified, preferably in the form of a standardized policy statement that can be shared electronically and amended as needed. In devising such a contract, the advisor needs to initiate a discussion of long- and short-term goals as well as deadlines for required paperwork. Specifically, the advisor and advisee need to set expectations regarding timeliness in communication. For example, they may decide on a deadline of two working days for a response to an e-mail from either party. This contract not only gives the advisor and the student a clear set of parameters for the relationship but can also provide continuity for the student in the event of advising personnel changes.

Choosing the Method

The advisor and student must also decide upon the chosen communicative delivery method for the relationship. Are e-mails sufficient? Would a live chat or phone call be more beneficial? Perhaps the pair should set up webcam meetings. The choices for electronic communication change almost daily, so the pair must choose carefully for consistency and reliability. An electronic format available today and disabled tomorrow can lead to disaster. Therefore, the advisor must ensure that the format offers consistent availability, ease of information recovery, and confidentiality between advisor and student. If the electronic format does not provide both advisor and student equal ease of access and usability, give-and-take discussions will begin to dwindle and the advising relationship to wither.

Communicating the Information

While a spoken conversation lasts no longer than the time it takes to speak the words, an electronic conversation can last in perpetuity, giving both the advisor and the student a reference point so that they need not reestablish the specifics of their relationship or unchanged information with each interaction. This permanent access offers benefits and drawbacks; because the information given can last on record forever, the advisor must ensure that it is properly updated. An answer to a question that contradicts one previously provided or that varies significantly from a colleague's response may erode the student's confidence in the advising relationship.

New advisors in particular must make every effort to hone and grow their communication skills. Furthermore, because clarity and consistency remain key to a trusting partnership, they must learn to educate students with sufficient information at the appropriate level of detail and quickly learn to filter the data exchanged in dialogue so that the advisee is not inundated with too much information.

As they refine their own filtering skills, new advisors may benefit from the rule of thumb that suggests a sender provide no more than three important facts per e-mail, if possible, and limit each e-mail to a single subject. For example, in response to a student who wants to know the classes needed to complete a program and important financial aid deadlines, the advisor should send two short e-mails, one on each topic, rather than one long and complex communique. A reply such as "I'm going to respond to your question about program completion first. Then I'll email you about financial aid deadlines" alerts the student that the second question will be addressed in a separate communication.

Online venues establish useful means of disseminating standardized, nonpersonal information, such as program course requirements. In addition to uninterrupted access, they offer more convenience in making referrals than the traditional hike-to-find manner of old. Electronic links certainly encourage follow-up better than maps and directions to other on- or off-campus resources. Electronic communication also makes sharing student information among colleagues, as appropriate under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) and other privacy policies, convenient.

Because few paper documents are typically used in online advising, the advisor must create an electronic file or advising portfolio for each student and remain absolutely fastidious and diligent in maintaining these files. The advisor who allows 200 answered but unfiled e-mails to pile up in the inbox clearly lacks organizational skills or priorities and may become embroiled in a long, embarrassing, and potentially costly data recovery process.

Prioritizing: Managing Caseloads

Advisors working electronically must carefully organize their daily routines to tend to all aspects of their caseloads. Advisors working in traditional face-to-face venues know who they will be seeing in the appointment and the length of the meeting, can review the student's file, and schedule time immediately after the meeting to document accomplishments made and those left to be completed. Advisors working solely via the Internet rarely can organize the day so simply: To keep all channels of communication open, they receive and return e-mails throughout the day (often many times with the same student), update blogs periodically, and monitor social media. New advisors may want to organize their time according to the type of communication monitored per day: three hours for e-mail communications, two hours for Facebook and Twitter posts, one hour for updating blogs, and so forth.

Because advisors and advisees can use so many different forms of electronic communication, the advisor must prioritize tasks and yet maintain flexibility. Prioritizing often comes down to determining consequences. An inquiry from a graduating senior who e-mailed yesterday may take priority over a nonemergency question e-mailed earlier from a sophomore. A quick e-mail to the sophomore promising an answer by the end of the week may suffice, and of course, the advisor must always follow through by the promised deadline. If phone calls went unanswered on Monday because of the volume of e-mails received over the weekend, then the advisor places returned calls at the top of Tuesday's to-do list.

Alternatively, advisors may set up their day with online appointments, setting aside specific blocks of time to correspond with specific students. As with those expecting return calls, students appreciate knowing the time of their appointment so they can look for a communique from the advisor. To prevent one or two students from monopolizing their time, advisors may want to set time limits on certain tasks such as phone calls and Skype meetings. Flexibility remains key to communicating effectively online.

New advisors should look for specific "key points in [the student] college trajectories" that typically do not constitute part of the day-to-day advising routine but require special attention, such as when students have advanced from the freshman and sophomore level to the junior and senior level, such that new course choices open up to them, or when a student is ready to enroll for the final credit hours required to complete a program (CCRC, 2013b, p. 76). Some schools have established an electronic alert system to let advisors know when these milestones are being approached or have been reached, but advisors without access to such a tool must track these important dates. Because all busy advisors can overlook less frequent but vital deadlines, new advisors, in particular, must organize and prioritize tasks carefully. They may find that creating a database or simple spreadsheets can help, and a wise advisor often turns to the institutional tech support office and fellow advisors for suggestions.

Personalizing: Building the Relationship

If "the appointment is the primary relational vehicle of advising" (Ryan & Woolston, chapter 14), then some may believe that the online environment inhibits the relationship between the advisor and student. They may think that the relational component suffers in online communication as emotions, such as warmth and cheerfulness, are replaced by a smiley face or silly emoticon. Although this concern may have rung true in the earlier days of electronic communications, students and advisors alike today show competency at texting, e-mailing, Facebooking, and tweeting all manner of emotions (both positive and negative).

Online advising need not and should not be impersonal. Simply responding to an e-mail with a friendly greeting and the student's name sets the desired tone. A response that begins with "Welcome, Dylan! I'm looking forward to working with you" promises an engaged advisor, whereas "Dear Student, We have received your enrollment request" reduces the advisee, with all his or her dreams and concerns, to a digitized entity. Advisors should strive to maintain a tone of professional affability with advisees.

Asking open-ended questions such as "What career do you plan to pursue with this major?" or "I see you struggled in your biology course last semester; can you tell me what prevented you from getting a higher grade?" encourages the student to continue the conversation and allows the advisor and student to learn more about one another. Advisors should always practice active listening skills. Applications and Insights—Advisor Checklist for Listening, Interviewing, and Referral Skills in chapter 11 provides an excellent tool with which to evaluate relational skills.

Although advisees may prefer maintaining an informal tone, advisors must not use jargon or unfamiliar colloquialisms because many students will not ask for clarification for fear of appearing unprepared or unknowledgeable. Furthermore, to develop a welcoming environment, the advisor should review the student's personal and academic information before beginning the conversation, as including a small tidbit of information gleaned in the review process can help break the ice and shows that the advisor has taken an interest in and remembers the student from past conversations.

Maintaining a Professional Network

New advisors, in trying to develop relational aspects of advising online with students, may inadvertently overlook their relationships with other professionals involved in helping students attain their goals. Advisors who advise strictly online must intentionally maintain their networks both within the institution and throughout academia to prevent both isolation and tunnel vision.

Because advisors form the front line for change, they must assiduously keep up with amendments to the policies and procedures of specific departments and the institution as well as the trends affecting the advising profession. They must know the best person to address a student's concern or who can proffer the best advice on advising matters.

Summary

Online advising can allow advisors and students to interact far more often than the all-too-common twice a semester scenario. Both students and advisors can continue the advising process at any time and in any location such that advisors must manage and prioritize a high volume and wide span of communications as well as personalize the relationship with students who they may never hear or see. Rather than being a disadvantage, well-organized and deliberately delivered online advising offers a myriad of benefits for both advisor and student that contribute to student success in many aspects of their college experience.

Aiming For Excellence

- Create a list of referral links with specific e-mail addresses of colleagues willing to help your students or who have specific knowledge your students will need. Using this strategy, students seek and meet another person with whom to connect (and with whom you can later follow up).
- Create a file with boilerplate e-mails for responses to common questions such as "When is the last day to withdraw from classes?" or "How do I log into my online class?" Name the e-mail response files appropriately for easy retrieval.
- Start a coffee klatch! Invite other advisors and other colleagues to an informal meeting once a month (week, semester, and so forth) to chat about challenges and triumphs in working with students at a distance.
- Join a NACADA Listserv, or other electronic mail board, for advisors working in distance education or one of the many other special interest groups. When confronted with a problem or troubling situation, you can look to the expertise of dozens, if not hundreds, of other advisors who have worked through similar issues.
- Start a best practices thread online. Send out an inspirational or informational e-mail to your network of fellow advisors and other supporters. For example: "I make note of my advisees' birthdates and send them short happy birthday greetings via e-mail." Encourage others to add to the thread and be sure to click *Reply All* to ensure that everyone on the mailing lists sees all the entries.
- Organize your day by utilizing an online calendar feature. Block off certain hours of the day for certain tasks; for example, 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.: answer e-mails; 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.: respond to Facebook and Twitter; 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.: review graduation petitions. This tactic ensures that all means of communication are being checked routinely.

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Applications and Insights

Advising Online: Advice From Advisors
Compiled by Jeanette Pellegrin from NACADA Distance Education Listserv

"While we tailor the message to the specific learner, we use template information to ensure that all advisors are sending out consistent messaging or are responding in a like manner. When learners get consistent information at each point of contact, it helps to build trust." *Seritas Smith, Coordinator, Advising Services, Athabasa University*

"If you advise by phone, send a detailed follow-up e-mail so that the advisor and advisees are both clear on what was discussed." *Jeanne Mannarino, Assistant Director of Advisement and Evaluation, School of Nursing, Excelsior College*

"Keep detailed records of what you discussed so the person becomes more 'real' to you and you don't lose track of someone 'out there.' They may already feel somewhat alone." *Karen Wilson, Academic Advisor, University of Hawaii at Manoa*

"Don't try to be everything to every student: Share info and connect them with resources early on. . . . You want to place the responsibility in their hands to manage their educational goals so they can fully own their failures and success." *Rebecca Roach, TRiO Support Services and Academic Advisor, Labette Community College*

"Limit the time for a telephone advising appointment and be sure the student knows it." *Catherine Holderness, Interim Director, University of North Carolina Exchange Program*

"Listen critically; find out what the real question is, not just the question that's being asked." *Nicole Ballard, Program Advisor, California State University*

"Try to anticipate questions that the learner may not be asking. If there is need-to-know information, it should be provided to all learners, whether they have asked a specific question regarding that topic or not." *Serita Smith, Program Advisor, Athabasca University*

"Smile when you answer the phone!" *Paul Castelin, Student Advisory Coordinator, Boise State University*

"Join a support group . . . open to anyone doing distance learning–related things—administration, admissions, advising . . . share (your) best and worst stories and encourage each other personally." *Catherine Holderness, Interim Director, University of North Carolina Exchange Program*

"Identify your 'go to' people as early as possible, those who are doing jobs similar to yours that you can share reality checks with, and those in other units who perform different functions but whose work impacts the success outcomes of your students." *Nicole Ballard, Program Advisor, California State University*