

Personal Philosophy of Advising

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for my advising practice. For me, the advisor, it sets the tone and parameters for which I offer services. For the student, it provides insight into what they can expect from me as their advisor.

Educational/Professional Background

I am a product of Detroit Public Schools. I graduated from Cass Technical High School in 1995 and went on to Central Michigan University where I obtained my Bachelor of Science in Child Development and Master of Arts in Professional Counseling in 1999 and 2002 respectively. Additionally, I obtained a Master of Arts in Employment and Labor Relations in 2015 from Wayne State. I officially entered the professional world in 2002, where I served as a counselor for TRIO Student Support Services at Wayne State University for nine years. I left WSU, and moved on to serve as a counselor and program manager at Marygrove College. I made my return to WSU in 2018, where I now serve as an Academic Advisor for the APEX Scholars Program. I am also the owner of an event planning business and founder of a (501c3) non profit organization.

Advising Practice/Philosophy

Advising is a helping process. My role as an Academic Advisor is not to provide students with every answer or solution to every problem. But rather, through coaching, provide them with a sense of empowerment that allows the student to uncover their own solutions. I help students discover what options work best for them. Together, through collaborative efforts, the student and I will work diligently toward strengthening their awareness, knowledge and confidence, as they begin their transition and matriculation from high-school to college and on to graduation. Through advising, I will help students help themselves. Over the years, my educational training, personal values/beliefs, and practical/professional experience have all worked together to help shape my philosophical approach to advising. This guides my every interaction with the students I encounter.

Relationship Building

I believe in the principal of seed, time and harvest or reaping what is sown. Taking the time to cultivate and nurture my relationship with students creates a trusting bond, which can allow additional insight into students' needs that can affect their ability to perform academically. By planting a seed of trust, a healthy, lasting bond is formed. This enables me to connect with them better. My first goal in relationship building is the *establishment of rapport* – this starts by simply making it a point to learn the student's name. Our initial interaction is usually in a group setting. I always play the name game which allows me to hear the students' names repeated throughout. By the end of the game, I know every student's name and a word they associate with themselves to help me remember. *Practicing Active Listening* is another key component. By maintaining eye contact, paraphrasing, and mirroring,

I work to help the student feel heard and understood and present myself as approachable, relatable and caring. **Promptness of response and maintaining scheduled appointment times** are also key factors in relationship building. I make it a point to respond to emails within a 24-hour period. I also do everything within my power to maintain all scheduled appointments. **Creating and maintaining a warm and welcoming environment** is very important to establishing healthy relationships with students. Playing into the senses is key - sight, sound, smell, taste. I am conscious of lighting and décor – not too dark or bright, maintaining a clean work space, use of wall paintings, throw rugs and floral arrangements are helpful. I always have music playing – usually spa music. I keep a plug-in going for aromatherapeutic effects. And, I always have a basket of candy and/or snacks. All of the aforementioned practices have proven effective over the years, however, one of the most effective practices in relationship building is **setting and understanding expectations**. Misunderstandings and miscommunication will quickly erode relationships or create an unstable foundation to build upon. Therefore, one of the first things I do is to clearly express what I expect of my students in our advising appointments and their approach to their academic matriculation. I also make very clear what each student can expect from me as their advisor. Because relationships can never be one sided, I have students write down what they expect from me in my advising role as well as what I can expect from them as a student.

Knowledge of Self

Counselor know thyself. This was the basic premise stressed to all students in my cohort when I was a graduate student working on my Master's in Professional Counseling. Knowing my personal values, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, desires, pet peeves have all been useful to me and my professional evolution as a counselor and academic advisor. It is also one of the major premises upon which most advising sessions are based when working with my students. I continuously urge students to look within, explore themselves, become aware of who they are. I stress that knowledge of self will drive how they occur in every facet of society. It influences how they respond to people and situations. It also influences their “why.” Every student that comes through my door will be challenged with the questions: “Why are you here, why do you want a college education? What is your purpose?” I urge students to move beyond the generic response of wanting to be successful, and to give their response more depth. For example, if success is a reason, I encourage students to define what success personally means to them. I encourage them to paint a full picture. I go further to emphasize that their why cannot be based on the desires and wishes of others. While that could have a small influence, it should not be the dominant driving force. Identifying and having a full knowledge and understanding of their “why” will be what formulates internal motivation. I stress that their college journey could be met with a number of obstacles, distractions and challenges. Knowing their why and having self-motivation will get

them through those tough times especially if no one else is around, in that moment, to motivate and/or encourage them.

Advising Style, Foundational Theories and Techniques

When advising students, I have adopted more of an eclectic approach. Because every student is unique, I utilize a mix of theories, strategies and techniques. I find the right tool to address a combination of the student's personality and the issue at hand. Because I have a counseling background, I blend counseling strategies with advising. The key for me is being knowledgeable of a variety of tools, being flexible, and knowing when and how to use them. While I do have my favorites, my current position is primarily structured around *intrusive advising*, and the *solution focused* technique is a frequent tool I use when needed.

Being proactive is paramount in my delivery of advising service. This requires me to adhere to a type of wrap-around service which includes and involves connecting with various offices, departments and resources across campus to enhance student success. Paying close attention to students' academic performance through mandatory bi-weekly advising sessions, in conjunction with early alerts issued by instructors, gives me the proactive ability to coach and refer students for appropriate assistance at the first sign of trouble.

My understanding that many academic challenges can be rooted in personal struggles, and my desire to address these issues, while sticking to a specific set of prescribed advising topics, prompts my use of the solution focused technique. This technique allows me to quickly shift my focus from a scheduled topic (which could range from goal setting, to time-management, academic planning, how to access campus resources or effectively utilize academic platforms) to address any issues impeding their academic progress. In these instances, I utilize this approach to urge the student to envision the problem as solved. I ask them to visualize and identify what and how their life looks with resolution, and what they specifically did to resolve the issue. The goal in using this approach is to help the student find rapid resolution. If this is not possible, a referral to the campus counseling center is prescribed.

While I adapted my advising style to meet the program and needs of the students I currently serve, I know many elements of my approach can be transferable as they are deeply rooted in my core beliefs. These beliefs have shaped my overall personal philosophy of advising and will follow me throughout my career. As I continue to grow and evolve as a professional, my style and approaches may change but my beliefs will most likely remain constant.

References

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