Effective academic advising programs require structured intervention strategies at specified times from admission to graduation.

Intrusive Academic Advising

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Development of intrusive advising relationships requires structured strategies of intervention by advisers at specified times throughout the students' semesters in college. Although these strategies will differ depending on the institution's size, organizational structure, and staffing model, it is critical that techniques are implemented so that advising is perceived and delivered as intrusive, and developmental, and serves as a catalyst for building personalized student-adviser relationships. When these strategies are integrated as necessary components of the institution's advising system, not only are the efficiency and effectiveness of advising enhanced, but the retention of students is ultimately affected in a positive way due to the solidness of this critical student-adviser link.

Advising time can be divided into two major periods: inquiry to enrollment and enrollment to graduation. During the first period, students complete their admissions processes, participate in assessment activities, register for classes, and receive orientation programming. The actual order of these events may vary depending on the particular institutional system or structure. The second period of advising, enrollment to graduation, is crucial for students and advisers in terms of implementation of intrusive interventions and maximization of the effectiveness of advising. Special attention must be given to first-semester freshmen, in particular; they require advising strategies that serve as checkpoints or "early-alert" techniques. These strategies are modified after the first semester to the point of the students' departure or graduation, taking into account the students' skills, needs, and course progress.

Inquiry to Enrollment

During this first period, advising should play a key role and yet often is taken for granted by advisers, or advisers may feel that they play only a peripheral...
role. In many institutions, the admission, assessment, registration, and orientation processes are primarily administrative; advisers (particularly those who are faculty members) may not get directly involved in this first period of advising at all. The following is an outline of specific strategies for intrusive advising that advisers can implement during each stage of the first critical period of advising. (Adaptations obviously will need to be made, given variations in the degree to which advisers can or are able to be involved.)

Admissions. Prospective students are significantly influenced in their decision to attend a particular two-year institution by the institution's academic programs, level of faculty-student interaction, and types of academic resources or support services. As a result, students who receive adequate and accurate information at the point of admission are more likely to select that institution. Although the admissions personnel in most institutions handle these processes, advisers can assume an active role through involvement (as wanted or as necessary) in the interviewing process, perhaps through referrals from admissions for advising assistance with targeted student applicants such as those who are undecided or underprepared. This involvement of advisers can occur before, during, or after the admissions interview, for those institutions that utilize personal interviews. Advisers can also participate in the development of academic brochures, either on program-specific areas (degree programs) or on more general areas (“Advising services for undecided students at . . .”). This strategy may be most relevant in larger institutions where interviews are not utilized to a significant degree or where advisers have little involvement with the admissions process.

Assessment. Due to the increasingly diverse student populations who enroll at two-year colleges, it is important to provide assessment opportunities for all students in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The results of this assessment are critical to the advising process, ensuring that students are enrolled in courses that match their skill and ability levels. Regardless of the type of assessment utilized (Assessment Skills for Successful Entry and Transfer, Educational Testing Service, in-house assessment tools) and the time and format in which the assessment is administered (during the summer, as part of an orientation program), advisers must become actively engaged in assessment.

Specifically, advisers, first, must receive assessment scores for all of their advisees; this is particularly important for advisers who may not conduct the initial advising sessions with their assigned advisees. Second, advisers must understand the implications of the assessment results for their advisees’ intended programs of study. Third, they must communicate the institution’s options regarding assessment to students who may not agree with the assessment results (for example, the opportunities, if any, for retaking the
Advising, selection of education and scheduling of courses, and becoming involved in at least one other program, is particularly important for institutions that have required courses and co-curricular activities. Advisers, particularly those involved in the first year of specific strategies for students, must be involved in the development of academic programs, include interviews, and advise students who are undecided or uncertain about their academic programs.

Significantly, influenced in their personal development, by the institution's advice and the students who receive it, the institution's role is critical. When advisors must contend with the sensitivities of students and the complexity of advising, they must be involved in the development of academic programs. The institution's role is critical. When advisors must contend with the sensitivities of students and the complexity of advising, they must be involved in the development of academic programs. The institution's role is critical. When advisors must contend with the sensitivities of students and the complexity of advising, they must be involved in the development of academic programs.
knowledgeable about parent or family orientation programming, a critical component of intrusive advising given the degree to which parents, spouses, and families are getting involved with advising concerns and legal issues.

Advisers too frequently view orientation as an event that does not directly involve them, perhaps because advising, registration, and orientation are actually physically separate and segregated activities. However, intrusive advising demands that advisers begin viewing orientation as a means to an end and not as an end itself or as an event that is planned and executed solely by nonacademic personnel.

Sage Junior College in Albany, New York, where I serve as an associate dean of student development, has developed an integrative advising, registration, and orientation system in which advisers and advising play critical roles. The orientation program is a required two-day program for all freshmen and transfer students held in the fall prior to the start of classes. During the first day of the program, students participate in three workshop sessions in which they are introduced to one another, to skills in decision making, and to career exploration. Most advisers facilitate one of these workshop sessions, thus exemplifying the principle that advisers are an integral part of the college, both through their advising roles and as participating members of the college community.

On the second day of the program, all students participate in organized and personalized stages of a structured advising process. In Stage 1, all new students meet with staff in their respective academic divisions to receive program-specific information regarding their majors, degree requirements, academic terminology, and so on. (All program advisers are present at this division meeting.) In Stage 2, following the division meeting, students break into small groups with their assigned advisers to discuss their goals and their programs and to begin course scheduling. All students are also given advising appointments for later that day to meet personally with their advisers. In Stage 3, students meet one-on-one at their scheduled appointment times with their advisers to finalize their selections of courses. (These appointments are held in the gymnasium, where all of the other student services personnel are also located for the period of registration; this facilitates student access to advisers and to the appropriate administrative offices.) Finally, in Stage 4, students register for classes.

Sage Junior College has a faculty-based advising system in which most full-time faculty serve as advisers in their respective divisions. Intrusive advising has become a trademark of these advisers, and new students have rated their satisfaction with advising services at 85 percent or higher since 1984.

Enrollment to Graduation

This second period of advising is the one with which advisers are most familiar and accepting of their various roles. Once students are enrolled in
orientation programming, a critical degree to which parents, spouses, advising concerns and legal issues. tation as an event that does not advising, registration, and orienta- d segregated activities. However, s begin viewing orientation as a or as an event that is planned and York, where I serve as an associate and an integrative advising, regis- advisers and advising play critical required two-day program for all he fall prior to the start of classes. ents participate in three workshop one another, to skills in decision st advisers facilitate one of these he principle that advisers are an their advising roles and as partici- 1 students participate in organized advising process: In Stage 1, all new tive academic divisions to receive their majors, degree requirements, program advisers are present at this e division meeting, students break-s to discuss their goals and their g. All students are also given adnet personally with their advisers. heir scheduled appointment times tions of courses. (These appoint- e all of the other student services od of registration; this facilitates ppriate administrative offices.) classes.
ed advising system in which most e their respective divisions. Intrusive e advisers, and new students have vices at 85 percent or higher since classes, advisers must initiate strategies or intrusive intervention techniques that provide necessary consistency for advisees, that serve as checkpoints or early-alert safeguards in the advising process, and that enhance the advising relationship in terms of assistance, problem solving, and guidance. There are four critical times for advising during which advisers should implement intrusive strategies for first-semester students.

Three Weeks (First Critical Time). Within the first three weeks of the semester, students have begun their adjustment processes, both academ-ically and personally. They are feeling more comfortable about asking questions, they have met other students, they know what they like and do not like, and they have a clearer understanding of their course materials. As a result, adviser intervention is critical to determine students' satisfaction with their courses and majors, to proactively address any perceived problem areas, and to provide relevant information on campus services.

Strategies to accomplish a three-week intervention include the following: (1) Schedule a group meeting of first-semester advisees to informally address the issues of academic and personal adjustment and course and major satisfaction, as well as any other problem areas. If possible, select a meeting time when all students are available and offer refreshments to encourage a more informal discussion atmosphere. Second-year students (research assistants, student mentors, and student advisers) can serve as valuable assistants in these meetings to lessen anxiety, heighten peer credibility, and enhance, from a peer perspective, the importance of the group meeting. (2) Send a brief note, memo, or postcard to all first-semester advisees inviting them to stop by or make an appointment to discuss how their classes are going; include a business card with office location and hours. Although not all students will follow up, this type of intrusive outreach requires little additional effort from advisers, and it may make a critical difference in whether or not a student feels encouraged to ask for help. A variation of this technique is to mail an attractive departmental or informational newsletter to all advisees at the three-week point, including items such as a list of available academic support services (tutoring, mathematics, accounting, reading, or writing laboratories; self-help workshops) or an outline of on-campus career resources, advisers' office hours and locations, and library resources. Students who would not actively seek out such services on their own may take advantage of them after receiving a newsletter of this type.

Six Weeks or Midterm (Second Critical Time). By the sixth week of classes or at midterm, students have a concrete understanding of how they are doing in their classes; many will have had at least one major examination grade or project to indicate their academic progress thus far. Students will also have established a pattern of class attendance and homework completion, and they are usually able to identify which styles or types of classes are most or least beneficial to them. Their social adjustment outside of the classroom has probably either positively supplemented their academic progress or has begun to show signs of trouble.
Advisers need to take advantage of the six-week intervention to positively support their students' efforts and to provide guidance and direction where improvement is needed. Strategies include the following: (1) Utilize midterm grade reports to discuss academic trends and options; in some cases, students will need to be counseled about dropping a class, changing their major, and seeking tutorial assistance. (2) Set up personal appointments with students whose midterm progress reports clearly indicate that there will be difficulty in successfully completing the semester; it is important that advisers establish specific plans of action for these students, indicating that recovery may be possible but that immediate corrective measures must be taken. (3) Coordinate the mailing of midterm progress reports with the scheduling of a meeting (individual or group) with advisees; if students have to physically pick up their reports from their advisers, there is more of a built-in opportunity for intrusive advising. (4) Provide advisees with specific referral information and resources; materials may be routinely available (lists of tutors and their locations, career development materials, time management information, test-taking strategies) or may be various one-page listings especially prepared for midterm assistance. (5) Utilize any of the above intervention strategies as a means for also preparing students for preregistration; it is important that advisers reiterate to advisees what their responsibilities are (reviewing the upcoming semester's course offerings, tentatively plotting out a schedule, and the like).

Preregistration (Third Critical Time). Preregistration is not only a time for students to register for classes but also a critical point of decision making and clarification. By the time students are actually preregistering, they have clear indications of their academic progress during the current semester and are focusing more attention on the next semester. If progress is satisfactory, students will be considering the appropriate courses for the following semester and should be carefully reviewing their degree completion requirements with regard to summer plans, internship options and requirements, and the like. If progress is not satisfactory, if a student is confused over a choice of major, or if consideration is being given to not returning to college, students need to utilize the preregistration time for discussion and exploration.

Advisers should play a proactive role in preregistration and avoid the option of merely signing off on preregistration cards. Depending on the system for preregistration, intrusive intervention strategies include the following: (1) Meet personally with advisees to plan appropriate courses of action; if the six-week intervention strategy was successful, this meeting should, ideally, flow more smoothly, since the student comes to the preregistration meeting prepared (not with a blank form or with empty hands). (2) Encourage students to utilize the period of preregistration as a time to complete financial aid paperwork, investigate future independent study or internship possibilities, and reconsider work hours and priorities in view of
six-week intervention to provide guidance and direction include the following: (1) Utilize trends and options; in some cases dropping a class, changing e.

2) Set up personal appointments reports clearly indicate that altering the semester, it is important of action for these students, but that immediate corrective action (mailing of midterm progress individual or group) with advisees; reports from their advisors, there are advising. (4) Provide advisees resources; materials may be routinely career development materials, strategies or may-be various term assistance. (5) Utilize any means for also preparing students to prepare to advisees what incoming semester’s course offered the like).

Preregistration is not only a critical point of decision making for the current and the next semester. If progress the appropriate courses for the reviewing their degree completion plans, internship options and not satisfactory, if a student is considered being given to not the preregistration time for

3) Preregistration and avoid the mistakes. Depending on the system strategies include the following: appropriate courses of action; successful, this meeting should, or with empty hands). (2) of preregistration as a time to prepare future independent study or hours and priorities in view of

the next semester’s coursework. (3) Help undecided, confused, and at-risk students develop planning timetables; students in these categories should be encouraged to utilize appropriate referral sources and resources and then to follow up again within a specified time frame with their advisors. (4) Call or write the students who did not preregister or who failed to show for their preregistration appointments.

Between Semesters (Fourth Critical Time). Advisers may not be actively involved in any between-semester intervention strategies because much of what happens between semesters is usually thought of in terms of administrative functions (academic actions, dean’s list). However, in many cases, students require more intrusive intervention after the semester has ended and after the grades have been received. Students tend to “disappear” more frequently between semesters, sometimes regardless of their academic standing, due to family pressures, changes in work, or perceived changes in career goals. Without the structure and support of the college setting, students may become isolated and lose sight of their planning or direction.

Advisers can enhance the linkages with their advisees between semesters through intervention techniques such as the following: (1) Apprise advisees who are placed on academic probation of their options and any academic restrictions; this can be done through personal interviews or through personalized notes. (2) Send letters or congratulations to advisees who make the dean’s list. (3) Review the records of advisees who are dismissed to determine what, if any, patterns or warning signals exist that may be of assistance in future advising sessions. (4) Contact advisees who are not returning for the next semester; this can be done by telephone or by mail.

Conclusion

Intrusive advising at four critical times during the first semester and three times each semester thereafter (six weeks, preregistration, and between semesters) provides long-term benefits for the advisers, the students, the adviser-student relationship, and, ultimately, for the institution. As a result of intrusive intervention strategies, advisers will have had direct, personal, and informative contact with their advisees a minimum of five times during the students’ first semester (including orientation). This contact builds student-adviser trust and respect and student responsibility—all important elements of a positive advising relationship.

Reference

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