

Chapter 23

Academic Advising for First-Year Students at University: A Conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of academic advising for first-year students at the universities. A review of literature has been carried out to address the main research question of this study. From reviewed literature, the chapter highlights the core skills of effective academic advising including effective communication, active listening and questioning, decision-making, problem-solving, interpersonal, and role modelling. The chapter indicates that core values are fundamental to providing effective students support, and they need to be shared with staff and demonstrated consistently to have an impact on the students experience. They include approachability, diplomacy, authenticity, high expectations, compassion, and equal partner not superior approach. The chapter discusses methods of academic advising. The study recommends that academic advising programs should include the vision, mission, and values of the university and establish a positive and caring relationship that enhances competencies for effective academic advising transparency in an institution.

INTRODUCTION

The history of academic advising can be traced back to 17th century where administrators and faculty members in colleges acknowledged that students require guidance outside the class regarding personal, moral, and academic issues. Over time, the informal guidance provided in colleges has been transformed into formal camps services offered by experts (Cook, 2009). Students' academic achievement is a major concern among countries, despite the enormous amount of money invested and the reforms made to curricula in many countries in recent years, these measures are not generally producing desired results. Putting students on a path has never been more urgent. Research has found that 75 percent of students enter college or universities without having final decisions made about their careers or majors. Many

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college students make the mistake of enrolling in a course simply because it fits within their schedules or out of sheer interest. There is overwhelming evidence that show that academic advising can work very well and provide benefits for students and has a positive impact on retention and success (Malik, 2000; Yorke, 2004; & Stephen, 2008). The work of an academic advisor is to guide such students to make the best decisions based on their majors and provide information as well as options to help them fulfill their degree requirements without wasting time and money on irrelevant courses. Not forgetting that academic advising is one of most important levers to pull within the university to positively impact student success (Thomas, 2017). Kuhn (2008) defined academic advising as situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social or personal matter. The nature of this direction might be to inform, suggest, counsel, discipline, coach, mentor or even teach. According to Campbell and Nut, (2008), academic advising is a powerful educational strategy to engage and support student learning. Through the educational process of advising, an advisor can guide students through meaning-making, skill identification and development, critical thinking and scaffolding of knowledge. According to Jane Drake 2016 as cited in (Miller 2016 p.50-51), it is academic advising that provides perhaps the only opportunity for all students to develop a personal and consistent relationship with someone in the institution who cares about them.

BACKGROUND

There is much research evidence to show that academic advising can work very well and provide benefits for students and has a positive impact on retention and success (Malik, 2000, Yorkem 2004 & Stephen, 2008). Academic advising is the process between the student and academic advisor of exploring the value of a general education, reviewing the services and policies of the institution, discussing educational and career plans and making appropriate course selections (Wong, 2021). Advising and tutoring have long been seen as critical to students' success, persistence and retention (Drake, 2011). However the impact of academic advising on attainment has often been overshadowed by a focus on the process and models of advising students' satisfaction rather than the wider impact that it can have (Hemwall & Trachte 2005; Propp & Rhodes 2006; Campbell & Nut, 2008). The most effective advisors assist advisees in effective decision making, thereby contributing to the development of mature self- directed students. Students need to be assisted to evaluate and re-evaluate their progress towards established goals and educational plans so that they can understand the nature and purpose of higher education and the value of general education. This enables them to consider their life goals by relating interests, skills, abilities and values to careers and the world of work (Bahn, 2018). Academic advising for first year students assist them in developing an educational plan consistent with life goals and objectives, alternative career considerations and selection of course. Holland, et al. (2015) highlighted the expectations students have of their advisors and the diversity in students' academic advising experiences, knowing a wide range of people from the staff, head of department, faculty and fellow students. Providing accurate information about the institutional policies, procedures, resources and programs were some of the expectation of first year students.

As Hably (2004) study in United Kingdom, argues that academic advising is one area in which the institution can enable quality exchange between the students and the academic environment. Thomas and McFarlane (2018) went further to argue that the true work of academic advisors is focused exclusively on student learning. Craig et al. (2020) in Japan alluded to the fact that it is important for someone in an advising role to like college students who enjoyed interacting with people and diverse populations. In

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