

## FOREWORD

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**The Need for a New Advisor Guidebook**

The following information should make academic advising professionals sit up and take notice:

- Of the NACADA members who listed their age on their membership form ( $N = 6,958$ ), 29% are over the age of 50 (NACADA, 2005a).
- In a fall 2005 survey of NACADA members with less than 3 years experience, only 10% of the respondents indicated participating in a formal training program (NACADA 2005b).
- In the same survey (NACADA 2005b), 62% of the respondents reported receiving training from colleagues and 23% said they were self-trained.

These data mean that within the next 10 to 15 years, a significant number of experienced advisors will retire. Advising professionals should be training and developing a new generation who will maintain the current level of advising expertise, yet in the 2005 NACADA *New Advisor Survey* only a small percentage of the new professional academic advisors who responded reported receiving substantial formal training and support.

Currently, most formal training programs remain short, heavily information-driven sessions (Gordon & Habley, 2000). This training format is understandable: New advisors must very quickly learn an institution, and trainers are under pressure to get new advisors working quickly with advisees. However, excellent academic advising, like teaching, is an art, and becoming well versed in the art of advising is a developmental process. As noted in a recent NACADA Clearinghouse article (Folsom, Joslin, & Yoder, 2005): “Advisors develop excellence over time, student by student, through an experiential synthesis of the conceptual, informational and relational components of advising.” When new advisors begin working with students, they discover that dealing with difficult student situations (i.e., those that involve synthesizing the conceptual, informational, and relational components of advising) are as challenging as information overload and that they need ongoing training support to develop fully as advisors.

Those who responded to the *New Advisor Survey* (NACADA, 2005b) acknowledged that the new advisor must absorb an enormous amount of information. In response to the question “What are the most difficult challenges you face as a new academic advisor?” respondents indicated “a steep learning curve.”

Respondents also seem to understand the developmental complexity of the job. One survey respondent noted that one of the most difficult challenges is “developing advanced skills and knowledge

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for more effective advising while also learning the basic details needed for accurate advising.” A substantial number of *New Advisor Survey* respondents cited “challenges presented by various student groups” as difficult (NACADA, 2006b).

New advisors also noted the need for better training: It was one of the most frequently cited challenges by *New Advisor Survey* (NACADA, 2005b) respondents. One new advisor suggested that training involve a “three-prong approach,” including “a general training at the start,” followed by a more “directed training” after about a month or so and ending with an “in-depth training.”

We agree. Experienced academic professionals can and should do more for the development of new advisors. Veterans need to create year-long new-advisor development programs that set realistic expectations for first-year advisor development, establish expectations for long-term development, and provide the necessary support to help new hires move from the first set of expectations to the second. Therefore, we wrote this *New Advisor Guidebook* to help those new to the field journey toward excellence and those already in the profession direct a new generation of advisors to success.

### **Guidebook Goals and Overview**

We designed this monograph for new professional advisors in their first year of advising and the people who train them. We have directed it to new professionals whose primary responsibilities are academic advising and those who are seeking an extended first-year development program. Trainers responsible for new advisors and wishing to expand an advisor training program into an advisor development program will also benefit from this monograph.

Our goal is that this guidebook

- functions as a primer or curriculum for new advisors.
- assists new advisors in creating a plan for self-training and managing their own posttraining professional growth.
- serves as a resource for administrators who wish to extend their current training programs into advisor development programs that support new advisors as they learn to synthesize conceptual issues, informational topics, and relational skills while advising students during their first year in the profession.

The first chapter in the *Guidebook* provides a broad overview of the conceptual and informational issues that academic advisors need to know and the relational skills they should master. The New Advisor Development Chart gives new advisors and their trainers a way to chart progress toward the art of advising (i.e., the synthesis of the conceptual, informational, and relational components).

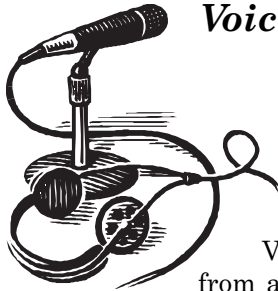
Subsequent chapters provide training content. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 address specific conceptual, informational, and relational components of advising. Chapter 5 examines the advising conference, and Chapter 6 looks at professional development beyond the first

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year. Finally, Chapter 7 provides trainers with guidelines for developing a year-long advisor-development program.

This is a practice-based guidebook. In addition to the articles, advisors and trainers will find informal tips, ideas and tools, Exemplary Practices, and suggested developmental activities. To show new advisors and trainers that they are not alone, we have included Voices from the Field, accounts from new and experienced professionals about aspects of their own development as advisors. For trainers we have included the Exemplary Practices of advising programs where advisors have instituted or are moving toward implementing an advisor development program.

Mastering the art of advising is a developmental journey. We hope the *New Advisor Guidebook* will be referenced frequently by those seeking to establish goals for improvement or to analyze a less-than-optimal conference. We hope the reader's copy of the *Guidebook* has notes in the margins and becomes dog-eared. Most of all, we wish successful journeys for all advisors.



### *Voices from the Field*

Voices from the Field are personal accounts from advisors who relate their experiences in their first year of advising and beyond. The contributors' candid recitations of successes and challenges illustrate the many pathways that mark the journey in the professional development of academic advisors. The stories are included for encouragement and for the practical suggestions that new (and experienced) advisors can use as they continue to forge ahead in mastering the art of advising.