

PHILOSOPHY AND THEORIES OF ADVISING

Developing A *Faculty* Mentoring Program: An Experiment

GARY L. KRAMER, *Coordinator of Academic Advising at Brigham Young University.*

MERLE T. WHITE, *Supervisor, College of Family, Home and Social Sciences Advising Center, at Brigham Young University.*

At the beginning of each school year, thousands of freshmen and new transfer students are oriented to the university experience. Many of these new students attend orientation sessions and activities while others are oriented more informally—by their roommates, friends, or by themselves. However orientation occurs, **little** doubt exists that the orientation period (defined by Feldman to encompass a one-month period) is a time of mild or, for some, severe crises.' According to a study by **Pantage & Creedon**, the first six weeks on campus are the most critical in determining whether a student is going to leave or stay.' Many students have never "been on their own." For these students, college orientation is a time of value clarification. Other students encounter crises as they shift personal and social habits and **as** they enter into new relationships with university staff and faculty. But perhaps the most important issue with which new students must wrestle is what place academics will have in their lives.'

This article first examines the literature on faculty-new student relationships **as** related to orientation. And then, based upon several assumptions about new student needs, a description of the development, implementation, and initial findings of an experimental Freshmen Mentoring Program conducted at **Brigham** Young University during the 1980-82 academic years is presented.

FACULTY-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS AND STUDENT ORIENTATION NEEDS

Gardner found that participants of a faculty-taught freshmen program produced a higher survival rate (retention) than non-participants. One causal factor resulting

¹K. A. Feldman and T. M. Newcomb, *The Impact of College on Students* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1970); E. Knott and D. M. Daher, "Structured Group Program for New Students," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 19 (September 1978), 456-461.

²T. J. Pantage and C. F. Creedon, "Studies of College Attrition." *Educational Research*, 48 (Winter 1978), 49-101.

³M. A. C. Sagaria, et al., "Perceived Needs of Entering Freshmen: The Primacy of Academic Issues," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21 (May 1980), 243-247.

from this study, conducted over an eight-year period, was the opportunity provided for freshmen students to meet regularly with a faculty member.' After studying eight colleges, Gaff & Wilson concluded that the greatest intellectual faculty impact on students occurs outside formal classroom settings.' Noel and Astin contributed supporting research on the importance of meaningful faculty-student interaction in retaining students.⁴

Other researchers advocated the importance of organizing new students into small groups and emphasizing the importance of academics in the orientation process. Doermann, for example, in 1926 feared the bigness of university life and therefore advocated a focus on needs of individual students.' Forty-one years later, Pappas found through a longitudinal study conducted at Kent State University that freshmen students organized into small group orientation sessions, compared to those who were not, encountered fewer adjustment problems and performed better academically.' Later in 1979, Moore's study added further impetus when he concluded that orientation programs tailored to student needs and smaller groups tended to succeed more than those that did not identify student needs and did not incorporate small groups into orientation programs.⁵ For example, Beck and Lowe found that students receiving individual or small group assistance were significantly less likely to change majors or to drop out.' Harris suggested not only the need for small group settings but also that materials should be carefully matched and presented according to student needs."

But what do students want from orientation? The primary need Sagaria reported for students entering college is academic information." After researching the needs of freshmen students for several years, her findings indicated that new students perceive academics as far more important than social, personal, housing, and other concerns. Sagaria concluded that orientation should focus primarily on academic issues. Studies by other researchers have resulted in similar findings. For example,

⁴J. N. Gardner, *Information Booklet on University 101* (University of South Carolina, November 1979).

⁵J. G. Gaff and R. C. Wilson, *College Professors and Their Impact on Students* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975).

⁶L. Noel and P. Beal, *What Works in Student Retention*, (Iowa City, Iowa: American College Testing Program and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1980); A. W. Astin, *Preventing Students From Dropping Out* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977); A. W. Astin, *Four Critical Years* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975).

⁷H. J. Doermann, *The Orientation of the College Freshmen* (Williams and Wilkins Company, 1926).

⁸J. G. Pappas, "Student Reaction to Small-Group Orientation Approach," *College and University*, 43 (Fall 1967), 84-89.

⁹P. L. Moore, et al., "An Organizational Model for Orientation Programs," *NASPA Journal*, 17 (Summer 1979), 40-45.

¹⁰M. L. Beck, "Decreasing the Risk of High Risk Students." *Community and Junior College Journal*, 51 (September 1980), 4-6; I. Lowe, *Preregistration Counseling: A Compororive Study*, Paper read at California College Association Conference (Monterey: April 1980).

¹¹N. H. Harris, "Strangers in a Strange Land," *Student Activities Programming*, 13 (May 1980), 30-32.

¹²M. A. C. Sagaria, et al., "Perceived Needs of Entering Freshmen: The Primacy of Academic Issues," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21 (May 1980), 243-247.

Developing A Faculty Mentoring Program

Brady found in her assessment of student needs that the provision and exploration of academic information is a critical need." High school seniors Rowe studied rated academic program information twice as important as any other campus program." Earlier studies also suggested both that new students ought to be oriented to the academic discipline, its purpose, and goals and that a correlative link exists between quality faculty-student interaction and student academic **performance**.¹³ Wilson, Gass, Dierst, Wood & Berry and Cope & Hannah have reported other supportive **findings**.¹⁶

As we consider the importance of faculty-student interaction, small groups, and academic emphases during orientation, it is interesting that Cesa described "leavers" from an institution as less likely to have faculty relationships. Indeed, they are also less likely to consult with fellow students or with advisors. In summary, he observed that students who develop relationships with faculty, advising personnel, and peers are less likely to drop out."

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT NEW STUDENTS AND ORIENTATION

New incoming students tend to enter college with similar needs. Thus, based on the literature reviewed and our observations of Brigham Young University's orientation program, the authors offer several assumptions about new students as they relate to orientation practices. The foundation for the development and direction of the Freshmen Seminar Program described in this article stems from the following assumptions:

- 1) Most new students are generally unfamiliar with their chosen academic discipline: faculty, coursework, academic expectation, and career application.
- 2) Most orientation activities are handled in mass (e.g., large meetings, mass mailings).
- 3) Faculty involvement with new students, particularly during orientation, is minimal and unstructured.
- 4) New students are generally unfamiliar with university resources.

"S. M. Brady, "Academic Advising: A Study of Faculty Goals and Student Needs," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 3- (1978), 145A-146A.

"F. A. Rowe, "Assessing Student Information Needs for Recruitment Purposes." *National ACAC Journal*, (July 1980). 3-8.

"P. R. Moore, "The First Year: Freshman Transition to College." *Improving College and University Teaching*, 18 (Autumn 1970), 297-304; E. T. Pascarella and P. R. Terrenzini, "Informal Interaction with Faculty and Freshman Ratings of Academic and Non-Academic Experience of College," *Journal of Educational Research*, 70 (September 1976), 35-41; E. T. Pascarella and P. T. Terrenzini, "Student-Faculty Informal Relationships and Freshman Year Educational Outcomes," *Journal of Educational Research*, 71 (March 1978), 183-189; E. T. Pascarella and P. T. Terrenzini, "Student/Faculty Relationships and Freshman Year Educational Outcomes: Two Further Investigations," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21 (Winter 1980), 521-528.

"G. A. Wilson, et al., "College Orientation Programs: A Perspective," *Learning Trends*. 6 (December 1975), 14-29; J. C. Cope and W. R. Hannah, "College Orientation and Freshmen," *Journal of Educational Research*. 69 (May 1975). 127-132.

"T. A. Cesa, *Undergraduate Leavers and Persisters at Berkeley*. Research Report (University of California at Berkeley, April 1980), 34.

"T. K. Miller, "Student Development Action Planning Program," A paper, (Athens: University of Georgia, 1978).

- 5) New students are generally unfamiliar with other academic disciplines within the college.
- 6) Attrition is highest among freshmen students.
- 7) Students make major changes, often uninformed, unnecessarily, impulsively.
- 8) Student involvement within the university, particularly with faculty, is a key to academic success and retention.
- 9) New students desire to obtain the most from a college education to be effective educational consumers.
- 10) Freshmen and new transfer students have differing needs.

DEVELOPING THE FRESHMEN MENTORING PROGRAM

Perhaps the unique aspect of the Freshmen Mentoring Program described in this article is that it was founded in and became a thrust of the academic discipline. This program intended to address the students' academic information needs to emphasize students' academic discipline and to involve meaningfully faculty from the freshmen students' disciplines. Therefore, the pilot study was developed through and administered by a college dean's office in conjunction with department chairmen. The advising center established in the college and responsible to the college dean coordinated the program. Thus, program instruction, administration, and evaluation were conducted by the academic college. (The number of faculty and students participating in the pilot study was kept small intentionally. Attention was devoted to program development such as developing and refining topical materials and selection and training of faculty rather than recruiting students in mass. Eventually, when the program is focused clearly and developed, greater emphasis will be placed on attracting more students and expanding the program to broader participation throughout the university.)

Additional developmental features of the Freshmen Mentoring Pilot Study included:

- 1) selection of faculty (mentors) by department chairmen according to their interest in dealing with the concerns and needs of college freshmen,
- 2) participation of selected faculty in a training program conducted by advising staff preparatory to and during the program,
- 3) faculty selection of teaching format (style) and meeting times,
- 4) student selection (voluntary) of a seminar provided in the academic discipline (one credit hour), and
- 5) faculty selection of the learning environment allowing the best possible achievement of seminar goals.

Program goals were established and designed to enable freshmen students to

- 1) interact regularly with a specially chosen and trained faculty member from the students' chosen academic disciplines;
- 2) explore and understand oneself as a developing adult interacting in a higher educational environment;
- 3) identify and utilize campus resources;
- 4) develop a peer support group for examining common concerns;
- 5) examine the purpose of higher education; and
- 6) clarify educational, personal, and career goals.

The pilot study was designed to respond to educational needs of students beginning their college experiences. Participating freshmen received in-depth orientation (thirteen weeks) to their academic discipline, its purpose, expectations, applications and career opportunities. Most importantly, these seminars conveyed academic student consumerism and relationship building between new students and faculty.

FRESHMEN MENTORING (SEMINAR FORMAT)

In keeping with program goals mentioned previously, four topical areas were identified and related teaching resources were developed and assembled for the seminar. Freshmen Mentoring (Seminar) Program subject areas and objectives of each are described as follows:

- 1) ***Nature, Purpose, and Resources of the University.*** Objective: To examine the role of the university and the implications (potential and responsibilities) for today's students;
- 2) ***The Academic Discipline.*** Objective: To provide freshmen students with an overview of the major curriculum, faculty, research, projects, course work, and career applications and opportunities;
- 3) ***Clarifying Personal and Career Goals.*** Objective: To assist freshmen students in identifying values, interests, abilities, and aspirations related to personal and career decision-making;
- 4) ***Clarifying Educational Goals.*** Objective: To assist freshmen student to link and synthesize academic preparation with related professional opportunities;

PROJECTED PROGRAM OUTCOMES

With the program purpose, goals, course content and administrative organization outlined, several long- and short-range program outcomes for students, faculty, and institution were anticipated. The projected outcomes guided the study's efforts and determined what was to be evaluated at the study's conclusion. (some of the projected outcomes listed will be reported after longitudinal studies have been conducted. Attainment of other anticipated outcomes are reported in the results section of this article.) Expected program benefits or outcomes were

- 1) meaningful faculty advising,
- 2) student clarification of educational and career goals,
- 3) improved freshmen student-faculty relationships,
- 4) student awareness and understanding of the academic discipline,
- 5) increased understanding of freshmen needs,
- 6) student involvement in and use of university resources,
- 7) improved orientation to university life,
- 8) increased retention,
- 9) peer support group development, and
- 10) positive attitude toward the institution (breaking down the bureaucracy).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The main tenet of the research design was to gather information for understanding the impact of the program over both a long- and short-range period. Research procedures, therefore, were designed to measure and report the program's immediate (initial) results and to determine through a longitudinal study of program participants the program's impact on student retention, their academic success, and use of university resources. The research conducted sought to determine whether (1) participants in the Freshmen Seminar produce a higher retention rate than **non-participants**, (2) participants use university resources more than non-participants do, and (3) the Freshmen Seminar positively influences participants. A brief description of procedures and the sample selection follows.

DESIGN PROCEDURES

To determine the effects of instructional treatment and to test the investigation's research interests, the following procedures were used:

- 1) Based upon random selection procedure, freshmen students enrolled in the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences during Winter and Fall Semesters, 1981 were assigned to a comparison group (see Table I);
- 2) The treatment group was made up of freshmen students from the Departments of History, Psychology, and Political Science who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study (see Table I);
- 3) Both groups were matched according to high school rank (GPA), ACT scores, sex, age, marital status, and race;
- 4) During the first week of class, a pretest was administered to both groups and the mean pretest score was established as the covariant;
- 5) Once a week for a period of thirteen weeks of each semester the treatment group received the Freshmen Seminar Program. The comparison group did not receive the treatment.
- 6) Following the treatment period, the treatment and comparison groups were given a posttest. The mean **posttest** score for both groups were computed;
- 7) An analysis of covariance was utilized to determine whether a significant difference existed between the group mean scores in terms of the effect of the treatment;
- 8) A follow-up study will be utilized to determine both groups use of university resources;
- 9) The grade-point averages of all participants (both groups) will be obtained and compared and treated for significant differences each term so long as participants remain in school;
- 10) The attrition rate from the major of all participants (both groups) will be followed, comparisons will be made, and statistical analysis for significant or not significant differences will be conducted;
- 11) An evaluation of the Freshmen Seminar Program was obtained from participating students and faculty.

**TABLE I
SAMPLING MATRIX**

Participation	Treatment Group	Comparison Group
Pretest	N = 43	N = 60
Freshmen Seminar	N = 43	—
Posttest	N = 43	N = 47
Seminar Evaluation	N = 43	—
Faculty Evaluation	N = 7	—

Developing A Faculty Mentoring Program

RESULTS

Three instruments were used in the study for data gathering and evaluation purposes. Each instrument and result are described below.

1) *Freshmen Student Questionnaire*. Used as a pre/posttest, this instrument ascertained students' (both comparison and treatment groups) familiarity with campus services; their social and personal development and adjustment; and their perception of college life, particularly its relation to career preparation. A comparison of needs and perceptions, important goals, and knowledge of university services between the Treatment and Comparison groups are reported in Tables II, III, and IV.

TABLE II
A Comparison of Needs and Perceptions
Treatment vs. Comparison Group

Need	Treatment Mean			Comparison Mean			Treatment vs. comparison pre	Comparison treatment post vs. comparison post
	pre	post	significant difference pre to post	pre	post	significant differences pre to post		
1. Have you decided on a career field?	3.52	4.49	**	3.61	3.79			
2. How certain are you of your academic major?	3.32	4.48	**	3.27	3.94			
3. Do you feel a need to associate with a faculty member from your major department?	3.96	4.42		3.89	3.81			
4. Do you feel a Freshman Seminar would improve your orientation to the University?	3.83	4.43		3.81	3.82			
5. Can you match career/professional opportunities with your major?	3.42	4.08		3.20	3.53			
8. Do you understand the academic purposes of the College of Family, Home and Social Sciences?	2.82	3.93	**	2.86	2.93			
7. How much have you thought about questions like "Who am I?" "What do I want?" and "What will I become?"	4.19	4.56	+	4.09	4.23			
8. Do you know where to go for academic and career assistance?	2.50	3.67	**	2.81	3.12			
9. Are you associated with students in your major field?	2.68	4.24	**	2.59	3.03			
10. Are you familiar with programs and activities that will meet your needs?	2.82	3.61		2.99	3.20			+

- no statistically significant difference.
- + statistically significant difference at the 10% alpha level.
- = statistically significant difference at the 5% alpha level.
- ** statistically significant difference at the 1% alpha level.

There were 37 needs- or perceptions-related questions, on topics ranging from careers and academics to personal and social issues. Students were asked to rank these from one to five, with one being low and five being a high ranking. Notice that the treatment group, the group that participated in the Freshman Seminar, were much more likely to show significant improvement in academic and career success abilities. Seminar students, for example, were much more certain of their majors and future careers. Control group students showed less progress.

TABLE III
A Comparison of Important Goals*
Treatment vs. Comparison Groups

Goal	Treatment Percent			Comparison Percent			Treatment vs. Comparison	
	pre	post	significant difference	pre	post	significant difference	pre vs. post	post vs post
1. Increase my knowledge in an academic field.	68.3	63.4	-	65.2	63.8	-		
2. To obtain a certificate or degree.	46.4	45.7	-	45.3	49.1	-		
3. To formulate long-term career plans/goals.	29.3	41.2	+	28.4	31.7	-		
4. To learn skills that will enrich my daily life.	41.4	29.8	+	36.1	32.3	-		
5. To improve knowledge or technical skills required for my career.	14.9	26.1	+	14.5	22.7	+		

- no statistically significant difference
 + statistically significant difference at the 10% alpha level.
 * statistically significant difference at the 5% alpha level.

*Students were asked to list three goals (out of 21) as most important to them. These percentage rates indicate the proportion of students who listed this goal as one of their top three.

TABLE IV
Knowledge of Services*
Treatment vs. Comparison Groups

Goal	Treatment Mean			Comparison Mean			Treatment vs. Comparison	
	pre	post	significant difference	pre	post	significant difference	pre vs. post	post vs. post
1. Career planning	.69	1.64	**	.74	1.02	+		**
2. Academic advising	.83	1.49		.81	.99			
3. Reading, writing, math and study skills improvement	1.06	1.62		.81	1.27	+		+
4. Guidance, counseling, and testing	.87	1.33	+	.89	1.12			
5. Library	1.62	1.89		1.57	1.61			+

- no statistically significant difference
 + statistically significant difference at the 10% alpha level
 * statistically significant difference at the 5% alpha level.
 ** statistically significant difference at the 1% alpha level.

*Students were asked to indicate their acquaintance with BYU services on a scale of zero to two, where 0 = "I did not know about the service," 1 = "I know about this service but did not use it," and 2 = "I used this service and was satisfied with it."

Developing A Faculty Mentoring Program

2) (Student) *Seminar Evaluation*. This instrument was used at the end of the pilot study (treatment group only) to determine the seminar's effectiveness and whether it met the objectives.

The mean score (on a scale of 1, meaning strongly agree, to 4, meaning strongly disagree) for each item are reported in Table V.

TABLE V
Student Seminar Evaluation'

<u>1.6</u>	(1)	The purpose and objectives for the Seminar were made clear.
<u>1.5</u>	(2)	There was agreement between the announced purpose and objectives of the Seminar and what was actually taught.
<u>1.6</u>	(3)	Class time was used well.
<u>1.4</u>	(4)	Students were encouraged to think for themselves.
<u>1.1</u>	(5)	In the Seminar I felt free to ask questions or express my opinions.
<u>1.4</u>	(6)	The mentor was well-prepared for each class.
<u>2.5</u>	(7)	I put a good deal of effort into the Seminar.
<u>1.2</u>	(8)	The mentor was open to student viewpoints.
<u>1.6</u>	(9)	I had an opportunity to pursue individual interests in the Seminar.
<u>1.1</u>	(10)	The mentor seemed to be interested in students as persons.
<u>3.2</u>	(11)	The Seminar was too philosophical.
<u>1.6</u>	(12)	More courses should be taught this way.
<u>2.0</u>	(13)	I would encourage all new students at BYU to take the Seminar.
<u>1.2</u>	(14)	The Seminar was informal and personalized.
<u>3.2</u>	(15)	The Seminar emphasized practical information too much.
<u>2.1</u>	(16)	The grading policy for the Seminar was made clear.
<u>1.5</u>	(17)	The Seminar, overall, was quite useful.

On a scale of one, meaning excellent, to five, meaning poor, and six, meaning doesn't apply, students rated each of the following items as it represented their feelings.

<u>1.8</u>	(1)	Overall, I would rate the supplementary readings
<u>1.6</u>	(2)	I would rate the general quality of lectures
<u>1.5</u>	(3)	I would rate the overall value of class discussions
<u>1.4</u>	(4)	I would rate the overall value of resource persons (outside speakers)
2.0	(5)	I would rate the value of the student project
1.7	(6)	I would rate the overall value of this course to me as

'Permission received from Dr. Charlotte Scherer, Bowling Green State University.

3) Faculty Evaluation, Freshmen Seminar. Participating Freshmen Seminar faculty utilized this instrument to evaluate their experiences with the pilot study. A condensed version of the faculty evaluation appears in Table VI. On a scale of 1, (meaning not achieved or poor) to 5 (meaning achieved, excellent, or outstanding), participating faculty rated each of six following items (See Table VI).

TABLE VI
Faculty Evaluation

<u>4.1</u>	The freshmen student was enabled to explore and understand himself/ herself as a developing adult interacting in a higher educational environment.	1	2	3	4	5	
		Not achieved				Achieved	
<u>4.6</u>	The freshmen student was enabled to identify and/or utilize campus or community resources that will enhance his/her academic program and progress.	1	2	3	4	5	
		Not achieved				Achieved	
5.0	The freshmen student was enabled to humanize the university enrollment by interacting with a faculty member.	1	2	3	4	5	
		Not Achieved				Achieved	
<u>4.4</u>	Please rate your perception of the overall student benefit derived from the time you invested in the Freshmen Seminar.	1	2	3	4	5	
		Poor				Excellent	
<u>4.1</u>	Please rate the personal benefit you derived from the time you invested in the Freshmen Seminar.	1	2	3	4	5	
		Poor				Excellent	
<u>4.4</u>	In your opinion, how would you rate the Freshmen Seminar Program overall?	1	2	3	4	5	
		Poor				Outstanding	

Developing A Faculty Mentoring Program

DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS

Formal and informal feedback from Freshmen Seminar participants (faculty and students) was highly favorable. Student evaluations indicated that the Seminar benefited students, that it provided students an unique opportunity to establish a meaningful relationship with a faculty member from their discipline, encouraged students to explore and discuss the purpose and value of higher education in relation to their own career plans and experiences, acquainted students with major university resources, and assisted them in examining their educational goals.

In addition to the formal evaluations conducted, participating students were also interviewed individually. They expressed willingness to recommend the seminar to acquaintances who were beginning freshmen, and when asked if they would delete any aspect of the Seminar all replied that they could identify no subject area they considered unessential.

The following sampling of comments were received unsolicited by the Freshmen Seminar faculty:

- . . . this seminar has been instrumental in bringing a sense of direction into my life.
- . . . the seminar helped the students involved get to know members of the faculty.
- . . . in a university of this size, it is difficult for students to find the opportunity to become friends with any members of the faculty. At best, the students get momentary consultations or short-term advising in a particular class.
- . . . the seminar was, for me, a success!
- . . . Just For Freshmen is a very informative class which can honestly help a freshmen student.
- . . . being able to discuss my questions, my fears and apprehensions about college with other students and faculty members was very helpful.
- . . . overall, I felt the seminar was a totally worthwhile experience. I feel that all new freshmen should be afforded the chance to participate in such a program.
this course should be offered to all new, incoming students at BYU.
- . . . the best part is the direction given concerning goal making.
- . . . the course is an excellent springboard into the future.

Faculty indicated that some areas came naturally (e.g., major discipline, related career opportunities) in regard to explaining them to new students. Particularly, the section of the Seminar dealing with philosophical aspects of becoming an educated person generated high interest and involvement among faculty and students. Other areas, such as helping students to clarify personal, educational, and career goals, were dealt with less effectively. Greater emphasis in training will be given to this area in the future. Overall, the faculty concluded that the Freshmen Mentoring Program should continue and expand as a major department thrust.

In summary, the Freshmen Mentoring Program was implemented as a pilot study in a selected academic college during the 1980-81 and 1981-82 academic years. This program's primary purpose was to provide a meaningful advising role for faculty — namely, as a mentor for students — and to fulfill a basic orientation need of

students: awareness of and involvement in their chosen academic discipline. While there may be limitations to the conclusions of this study, the data generated thus far suggests that the Freshmen Mentoring Program achieved the established short-range objectives, positively influenced participating freshmen students, and supported continuation of the program on a larger scale.