

Personal Statement and Advising Philosophy

My road to a career in advising is not a traditional one. As an undergraduate student at Indiana University, I was a liberal arts major who was determined to work in a museum. To pursue what I thought was my dream career, I moved to New York City in the late 90's. I started out by working at the Guggenheim Museum as an administrative assistant for a year. I then enrolled in graduate school at Bank Street College of Education while interning at the Brooklyn Children's Museum and student teaching at public and private schools in Manhattan.

Missing my home city of Indianapolis, I decided to take a job at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis after graduate school. I started as an educational programmer for elementary school age children, leading workshops and running the summer camp. Two years into this position, I was promoted to the Intern Program Manager position at the museum. I found this move to be personally enlightening. Admittedly, teaching young children had been a bit of a struggle for me—although I had studied it, and believed in it philosophically, the work itself did not come naturally to me. When I began working with college students through the Intern Program Manager position, I felt like something “clicked.” I found that I loved working with this population and helping them at this critical time in their lives. The museum internship program allowed students from universities across the state, country and world to explore their interests and learn what it was like to work in a professional, well-run organization. I absolutely loved facilitating that process for the museum interns.

Realizing my true calling was not actually in the museum world but in working specifically with young adults, I started to look for jobs in a university setting. I found a position at Herron School of Art and Design in 2005, which allowed me to learn so many different aspects of working in a university. I often referred to myself as a “jack-of-all-trades” while working at Herron. I was able to learn the recruitment side of student services, manage incoming student scholarship applications, run several events throughout the year, start up a resident-based learning community, assist with orientation, help coordinate the new graduate program, manage the graduate application process and more. But my favorite part of the job by far was working in an advising role with the students. I loved being able to help students process their experiences, break down their goals into manageable steps, and problem solve when it came to scheduling classes.

My move to the Honors College in 2013 has allowed me to focus on advising for the majority of my job. Working with students who possess a range of backgrounds, interests and talents to help them fulfill their college aspirations has been a perfect career match for me. From working with students on probation to students with a 4.0, I have been fortunate to be able to interact with students in a highly individualized manner. I strive to constantly improve in this role by continuing my education through workshops at IUPUI and presenting at local and national conferences.

My time in the Honors College has really allowed me to reflect on my own practices for advising. My philosophy of advising seeks to meet students at every stage of their college experience. It is a combination of both supporting the student in their endeavors and challenging them to think about the next steps. The goal is for my students to become meaningfully involved in their academics and their community. My hope is that they leave IUPUI feeling that they were able to take advantage of every relevant opportunity the university can provide, and have a good sense of who they are and what they want to accomplish.

I commit to provide the following for every student:

- **Encouragement and Support.** Starting early, I hope to establish a strong advising relationship with my students. As advisors know, students receive a lot of support in high school, and making the transition from high school to college can be difficult on many levels. For this reason, I meet with all of my students in their first semester to discuss how their transition is going and guide them to support systems that they may need. I strive to get to know my students and show them that I care about them and their success. I demonstrate that I am interested in their academic progress and extracurricular achievements. And when they face challenges along the way, I am there to support and encourage them as they work through the situation.
- **Inclusiveness.** I value the perspectives and contributions of all students, and believe that the campus community is made stronger when a multitude of cultures, races, religions, economic backgrounds, geographic regions, genders, sexualities and beliefs are represented. My office is a non-judgmental space for my students, because I want them to feel as free and open as possible to be their authentic selves in our meetings. By having this level of openness, our meetings can be more meaningful and productive. I also let them know that I will advocate for them if they need it.
- **Challenge Established Thinking.** While I aim to support my students and their decisions, I also encourage them to examine their academic goals, describe their aspirations, reflect on their decisions, and speculate about possible educational and career outcomes. Thought patterns that were established prior to attending college sometimes need to be challenged, especially when I notice that a student is not content with the way things are going. I ask my students to examine why they have chosen a particular major and career path. I want to know what or who led them to decisions they have made about their lives. Challenging established beliefs that students possess either helps them to be more committed to their prior decisions, or to change course to something that better suites them. Ultimately, I want my students to feel a sense of purpose, and feel confident in their goals.
- **Expand Expectations.** Once the student is confident in what they want to pursue and have the proper support mechanisms in place, it is my job to help them think about the future. This can be a delicate process of determining when a student is capable of more, or when he or she has taken on too much. Consistent meetings help me to gauge the student's present state with regard to their accomplishments and brainstorm with them about adjustments to help them meet their goals. Having a broad knowledge of major requirements, career services, research, volunteer, and study abroad opportunities helps me in this endeavor, and I am always pushing myself to have as much knowledge about these areas as possible to be a resource to my students. My approach is both prescriptive and appreciative—I work with my students to facilitate the expression of their own ideas, as well as help them to design a plan to reach their goals.

I consider myself very fortunate to have a job where I work with students every day to help them find solutions and create a vision for their future. To be asked by our campus's academic advising association, JACADA, to represent my university and apply for the NACADA Outstanding Advising Award has been an honor and a privilege. Thank you for taking the time to review my application and for this opportunity.