



ADVISING
COMMUNITIES

VIRTUAL PANEL

ADVISING HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS ON PROBATION

Thursday, April 8th 12:00 p.m. EDT

Whether it is honors students who are on probation for their honors status, multipotential students on general probation, students in highly-selective institutions or programs who are on or in danger of being placed on probation, students with complex experiential pursuits who are struggling academically, or a similar scenario - what advising strategies work best when working with this student population?

Q&A FOLLOW-UP

How do you create personalized messages for all students without having to compose them all individually when you have a large caseload?

Save a set of drafts or use email signature function to have those "formula" emails on hand that you can tweak.

You mentioned bringing students together who are in probation program - do high achieving students shy away from this due to shame? Do you ever have any backlash about bringing students in this situation together? I understand that it allows them to feel like they are not alone, but I think it can also "expose" students in a way they don't feel comfortable with.

I have found that giving the students an option of participating in a group format is helpful. It can be a component of your probation program but maybe not the only part.

Sometimes group meetings can be held with a peer mentor as well.

Normalizing probation as not a punitive process but rather a valuable resource can help to keep that negative stigma from clouding the process.

Also - when I offer my probation groups they are called 'workshops'. So if a student is concerned about this then tell their friends they are going to a workshop and not a probation session.

What are the FERPA considerations of bringing together a group of students like this? If it's optional, they are self disclosing in a way but do you do anything (sign an acknowledgment, etc) to cover FERPA concerns?

In our group workshops, we address college success skills like time management, organization, study skills. We don't openly discuss individual student's situations unless the student wishes to disclose that information in an open discussion. Another option is to cover FERPA rules at the beginning of session.

You can also have a group workshop that is open to everyone but perhaps required for your students on probation. Then no one really knows whether or not the other people in the room are on probation. It's sort of a Universal Design for Learning approach to advising.

Our students are required to enroll in mentoring or study skills courses as a condition of their probation, but the courses are ALSO open to any student who is interested in enrolling....so students in the course may be on probation, but also may not be, so it's less clear to anyone in the course who is there by choice vs. who is there as a requirement

How (if at all) do you intentionally incorporate career counseling into these meetings or programs beyond a referral? Do you ever have an "assigned" career counselor?

For career counseling - it really depends on what the issue is with the student but if there is a 'crisis of career' then a connection to career services for an individual session is what I do. Assigning a career counselor really depends on your campus and availability

In the group sessions, how do you advertise it? Are the sessions for anyone or just those on probation? We are a small campus and students know who others are and our concern is others finding out the student is on probation.

We pitch our programs and initiatives as "Student Support opportunities" instead of probation requirements to our student body.

For those who recommend multiple meetings with students on probation as well as employing a coaching framework in those meetings, do you have designated advisors for this purpose, or is your entire advising team trained this way?

It is up to individual colleges depending on staffing availabilities and resources. At some colleges, they have had designated "Coaches" to work with students and just focus on assisting those who are underperforming. Some smaller colleges may incorporate it into their advising models. For example, some colleges are shifting to a "holistic case management" model systemwide, and this will bring it into advising responsibilities.

Are there any consequences the student faces if they do not attend the mandatory sessions or workshops?

As far as consequences, it really depends on what the college has set in place for non-participation. Inability to register? Loss of scholarships? Removal from a program? It is up to you to determine your 'teeth'.

Are there other benefits of group/peer advising when meeting with students who are on probation, as opposed to on-to-one advising?

Some students will connect better with peers and can be open more with someone their age. It can also be a live demonstration of someone who made it through as well - which goes back to that 'normalizing' failure concept, especially when the peer was once on probation. It can also help with the 'load' of if the advisor cannot have as many meetings with the student.

I appreciate the conversation around normalizing struggle. I wonder if anyone can offer tips on fostering a culture that defines success in broader terms than GPA to help support a student's transition out of a program that requires a high GPA and still feel that they can be successful and valued?

I like to talk about how we learn - that we learn most from reflecting on mistakes and failure.

That failing is when you fail to learn from your mistakes

We talk a lot about how to define success, including things other than GPA, especially emphasizing skills developed.

Thinking about the terminology you use can help also. Talk about Academic Recovery instead of probation or warning.