

NACADA Region 1

Zoomed In or Zoned Out? Connecting with our students in a variety of ways

October 13, 2020

This was an open, discussion based session. There were small breakout sessions discussing current challenges on our campuses and how we are addressing/adapting this semester and information sharing in the main meeting. Here are notes collected from this session:

Technology mentioned:

- Colleague and Ellucian - students can look at their plan during appointments or on their own to see graduation plan
- Stellic
- Qless - an online waiting room management system
- Google Voice
- Sending Electronic Greeting Cards to students <https://www.americangreetings.com/>
- Gchat, Slack, Teams - office instant messaging systems to stay connected with colleagues
- Screencast-o-matic or Screencastify
- Instagram
- Blogs

Things that have been successful:

- Video Advising Sessions
 - Students more willing to participate in Zoom
 - Some students more reflective in their growth development during advising meetings
 - You can get a sense of where a student is from a Zoom meeting if their video is on
- Instant messaging/texting formats of communication with students have been popular
 - Google Voice has texting capabilities. Email outreach sometimes not responded to, but they might be more likely to respond to text.
- Advising Options - Early morning and later evening hours
 - Helps students in other time zones and advisors who need more flexibility with work hours
- Summer classes moved online which made Fall smoother - When you know the format of classes in advance, easier to plan services in advance
- Attendance rate for appts is better - not as many no shows
 - Caveat - We should be more flexible for no shows as many students have lots of responsibilities in addition to being a student and are managing a lot
- Advisors bring information, Student Life/activities brings the fun
- Events

- “Pizza and Pups” which was a popular pre-COVID in person event, turned into and Online “Bring a friend” event - pets, loved ones, friends.etc. - about half stayed for break out rooms to socialize after the main event
- Using Alumni to connect with students - alumni want to speak!
- Peer Advisors
 - Videos on Instagram
 - Blog posts for tips like managing their time, balancing school with other responsibilities.
 - Peer advisors starting to dabble in Peer Mentoring
- Online Tutorial videos - Created several tutorials on how to do different things like registering for classes, and others and they like it - I use screencast-o-matic or screencastify
- Connecting with colleagues
 - Gchat, Slack, Teams and other office chat systems to talk with colleagues
 - Helpful for keeping quick things out of emails
 - during advising meetings when you need help/information/support
 - Very helpful when in a crisis situation, can invite a colleague/superior into a video meeting if it isn’t going well and you need support
 - Compile a list of go to people in every department across campus who you can reach out to when you have questions or need to connect a student
 - Standing meetings to hold time on your calendar if you frequently collaborate on projects
- Setting Boundaries to protect your time
 - Make yourself a priority
 - Try to designate specific work hours, even if they are outside of 9-5 traditional hours
 - Block time on your calendar for emailing, admin time, project time, etc. so you aren’t in student meetings back to back all day
 - Remove work email from phone/device so you don’t check it “off hours”
 - Create an accountability partner to make you set and keep boundaries
 - Take the advice we give our students

Challenges expressed:

- Working from home
 - Home work/life balance (what life??)
 - Hard to set up boundaries
 - Working with small children, caring for older relatives, pets, other interruptions at home
 - Late night advising is happening now, but what will students expect when I am back in the office trying to work a “normal” work day/ hours?
 - Working from home when campus is open- Not everyone is approaching the pandemic the same and colleagues might not respect the difference in how we personally approach this pandemic

- Feeling like separate advisors vs. a part of a larger team as there are not many staff meetings and time for collaboration
- Juggling time between working from home and days on campus
- More responsibilities than just advising
- Advisor experiencing Caring Fatigue - Concerned about student academics and now also seeing more about students home lives and having added concerns on top of academics
- Converting services/technology
 - Prior to COVID everything was paper advising info so the switch to PDF forms, making things digital and accessible, etc. took time.
 - It takes time to format trainings online to use new platform well
 - New tech was rolled out fast and so it was not set up well as it could have been
- Student experience
 - Building community online is hard
 - Students can't have spontaneous interactions between classes, in the halls, etc.
 - Last 3 weeks will be 100% remote after Thanksgiving. Just when you get used to something, it will change formats for everyone on campus
 - CTE programs have in person requirements, are they prepared for when they do externships?
 - Not every student has tech for Zoom - phone appointments are better for connections for some students
 - Screen burnout - ask specific questions to your advisees to find out how they are doing and working through challenges this semester. Don't just ask "how are you?" as many students automatically respond "good" without actually answering the question.
 - Frustrated students having trouble getting responses from other offices, feeling shuffled around and no one is helping them
 - Advisor makes note of frustrated student to check in later. Frustration could be this one situation or something else underlying
 - Students calling to talk to someone for immediate assistance rather than scheduling appointments
 - Students having difficulty balancing the work for their classes when everything is online
- Advising engagement is down, not as many students attending advising meetings
 - Will there be a later spike around registration?
- Emails
 - So many emails! Hard to keep up
 - Students wanting faster response time thinking if you are working from home you must have more time to respond
 - Students send emails that look like text. Advisors are spending time coaching students for professional emails, and adjusting students' expectations on an appropriate response time
 - Advisors needing to help interpret/better articulate questions to other offices that didn't understand the students original outreach

- Advisors needing to nudge faculty or other offices for a response if it truly has been a long wait time for a student to receive a response.