

The New Advisor Guidebook: Mastering the art of advising

Chapter 10 - Developing self-knowledge as a first step toward cultural competence

Reader Learning Outcomes

Readers will:

- Identify their own cultural limitations and biases
- Assess the institution in which they work to determine what institutional knowledge may be needed in order to be effective in advising students.
- Utilize the "5 questions" in practice to think broadly about the needs of individual students with whom he or she works.
- Recognize and articulate the value of diversity as a strength for students.

Aiming for Excellence discussion questions and activities

- Attend activities and events both on campus and in the community that represent a broad range of cultures, including your own. Demonstrate to students the value you place in cultural competence by being visible at events in which you appear to be an outsider.
- Seek mentors in areas where you lack expertise. If new to an institution, find a mentor with significant institutional memory as well as those within other departments with whom you can effectively partner.
- Do not assume that your mentor will guide the relationship; ask questions such as "What do you like most about working here?" "If I have a good idea about something, who do I talk to about it?" and "How do advisors get involved in decision making?" to identify institutional and unit strengths and challenges as well as the influential formal and informal leaders on campus.
- Speak with students, both your advisees and others around campus, about their experiences. Find out the good and poor sources for student advocacy.
- Work with those who are marginalized to bring their concerns to the forefront.
- Attend or start an advisor reading group. Suggest articles that not only reflect diverse subject matter, but also authors exhibiting uniqueness in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and background.
- Share and gain knowledge across institutional lines. Find faculty members, paraprofessionals, and administrators to speak at your next department meeting or in-service.
- Be vulnerable. Admit to gaps in your knowledge so you can learn more. If your personal experience does not include exposure to specific groups, ask those responsible for educating and mentoring these cohorts about the history of the group, student needs, and opportunities for involvement.
- Review NACADA resources, including both the NACADA Clearinghouse and the Commissions and Interest Groups specific to student populations to learn about various student cohorts.
- Select one of the case studies presented in this chapter. For each of the five questions, develop questions that will elicit solid information from the student and will improve your understanding and advice to all students.
- Many institutions have established professional development programs or diversity offices that offer workshops dealing cultural competency or global cultural awareness. After attending a workshop, make a list of the skills and ideas helpful in your advising practice. Identify two skills or ideas to implement immediately. In your journal, record the ways in which your new tools are working. Revisit your list on a monthly basis and continue to implement skills and ideas until you have gone through your entire list. (Folsom, 2007, p. 107)

- Request that the person in charge of advisor training and development invite a diverse group of students to discuss their experiences at your institution as well as identify the assistance they seek from advising (Folsom, 2007, p. 107). Where no advisor training and development exists consider inviting students to an informal feedback session (offer snacks).
- Consider whether your office is welcoming to all populations. What can you do to make your office welcoming to all student populations? (Folsom, 2007, p. 107)

Reference

Folsom, P. (2007). Aiming for excellence: Suggested advisor development activities (Monograph 16) (p. 107). Manhattan, KS: National Academic Advising Association.