



Key Issues for Academic Advising Administrators
Panel Discussion Handout

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Overview

Today's academic advising administrators deal with many issues. Borrowing from the just released NACADA monograph *Academic Advising Administration: Essential Knowledge and Skills for the 21st Century*, three academic advising administrators will discuss key issues administrators face today and highlight challenges administrators will face in the future.

Initial Questions to be addressed

1. *What do you see as the most important skills that advising administrators need?*
2. *Where do administrators go to get the skills they need?*
3. *What do you see as the key issues that administrators deal with today?*
4. *What do you see as the key challenges that administrators will face in the future?*

Tips from current Advising Administrators

What two tips or recommendations do you have for advisors who want to become administrators?

Karen L. Archambault, Director of Student Services, Branch Campus & Higher Education Centers
Brookdale Community College: The Community College of Monmouth:

1. Find a role model (may or may not be a true mentor) whose work you value and respect, even if s/he is outside of your direct field. Ask them questions, ask how they evaluate issues/information.
2. Get involved. Whether you are looking to move up at your current institution or to move on, you need to demonstrate that you understand a larger picture than "just" advising. Join committees that still connect to students, represent your department on larger issues, and show that you can think beyond your assigned world.

Cynthia Pascal, Coordinator of Academic Advising and Retention, Extended Learning Institute, Northern Virginia Community College:

1. Remain professional in all situations. Often it is easy to get comfortable and complacent in our dress and vocabulary when we work in a fast paced student centered environment. This flexibility will change when you become an administrator causing your former peers to become resentful and suspicious. Dress professionally, act professionally,

and keep your personal information off of social media. This will help ease the anxiety and stress of transition from an advisor to an administrator.

2. Find a mentor. Find a mentor who has trudged the road from advisor to administrator. They can help guide you through the transition and beyond. Use this mentor to help groom your resume, boost your administrative confidence, and comfort you after a hard day at the office. Then, once you get established, help the next advisor become a success in the field.

Brian G. Hinterscher, Coordinator of Advising, College of Arts & Sciences, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville:

1. Consult current advising administrators for feedback/advice.
2. Be prepared to not know the answer for everything. Just as we share with our students that we may not know the answer for one of their questions, the same can go for our staff members. Be cognizant that you have your limits and know when you should reach out to your resources

Gayle Juneau, Executive Director of Academic Advising, University of Nevada-Las Vegas:

1. Engage in your work as an academic advisor at a different level by offering to or agreeing to work on special projects as offered by leadership in your office. With focused attention on retention programming as one of the critical topics on university agendas these days, there are often opportunities to design targeted programs (first year, alternate admits, first generation, etc.) and interventions that add to the menus of services offered by academic advising offices. In addition, there are often opportunities to connect the work of student affairs, academic affairs, and student experiences by way participating in campus organizations and campus committees.
2. Finally, as much as possible, network with professional organizations for skills development, mentorship, and expansion of knowledge through presentations and publications.

Nancy Markee:

1. Show initiative, be responsible, and be willing to give 110% (in other words, nothing can substitute for hard work!)
2. Try to identify and volunteer for opportunities that will put you in a leadership role – even if it is sharing that role with another person you can start getting leadership experience

Jennifer Joslin:

1. Be a learner! Being successful in your career takes time and learning opportunities are all around you. Learn from all the experiences you have as an assistant director, community organizer, volunteer, facilitator, and faculty member. And learn from good and bad experiences in those roles. You can learn as much about how to run a good meeting when you attend a poorly-facilitated meeting, as when you see a “master facilitator” in action.
2. Develop a point of view or a vision of who you are as an advising administrator and of what you want to accomplish in the workplace. Knowing who you are is invaluable. Having a point of view:
 - guides you through ethical and legal situations;
 - shapes your hiring, training, evaluation and assessment processes;
 - serves you well at staff and faculty meetings;
 - guides your budget and resource allocations
 - protects you (sometimes!) from “information overload” (you can winnow out what is and isn’t important);

Is there one area in which it is very difficult to get "on the job training"? If so, what suggestions do you have for advisors to build skills in that area?

Karen L. Archambault:

Budget. Once you have one to manage, the assumption is that you know what you’re doing. Part of the challenge is that there’s much more than just the numbers – there are institution specific processes as well. Ask whoever in your department is responsible for the budget for help with understanding it. Then ask whoever is responsible in your division. Try to understand the budget on both as low and as high a level as possible.

Cynthia Pascal:

Often schools focus on technical training and policies and procedures. Although this is helpful in completing tasks, it does not teach you the nuances of being an advisor. Advisor training must be comprehensive; it must have an element of theory and must wrap up with assessment. Details like “how do you build rapport, how do you manage student expectations, how do you foster thoughtful decision making?” need to be explored. Without this skill development, you will have disengaged students and resentful advisors.

Brian G. Hinterscher:

Coming into a job where there is a resistance to change can be a challenge. Be willing to observe how things are done before making a lot of changes. Listen to your staff about ideas they may have, and be up front with them that some of their suggestions may or may not be used. Be prepared for the “worst-case scenario” when presenting changes to the staff. Explain why these changes are occurring and how they will benefit your office/department.

Gayle Juneau:

Across my professional experience, it seems there are few standardized routes to serving as Director of Academic Advising. In addition, the responsibilities included under the umbrella of the Director position are often shifting as leadership within a particular college or university shifts. As a result, the standards vary and the bar for successful performance can be a moving target or set of targets.

Jennifer Joslin:

Budgeting – the nuts and bolts – can be a mysterious part of being an administrator. Supervisors are sometimes skittish about showing the raw numbers, allocations and other personnel-related details of budgeting. Don't be afraid to say what you don't know when meeting with your budget person. Ask for written explanations of different institutional rules, take notes, review line items until you recognize them month to month. Don't hesitate to rely on campus workshops from Human Resources or Finance Services to learn more about budgets and budgeting principles at your institution. Be forthright with your mentors about your need for growth or mentorship in this area. They can't assist you if they don't know! (Be sure to follow up as you acquire budget expertise and skills too. They might be future references and they need to know of your increased competency.)

Nancy Markee:

For me this has been the general area of human resources/supervisory skills. So many situations you encounter are unique unto themselves; since you can't predict when and what you might encounter, training in advance is difficult. Particularly true if you are not yet an administrator and have aspirations of moving in that direction. I have attended workshops on various supervisory topics, done role plays, etc., but the situations you end up encountering typically aren't textbook cases. What I have found extremely useful is discussing situations I encounter with my boss/mentor and talking things out and bouncing ideas off of him. I also have a couple of other individuals on campus in similar academic administrative roles and we often share situations and ideas with one another as well. You need to realize you may make mistakes and use each situation as a learning experience for yourself.

Suggested Resources

Resources for Advising Administrators section of the *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources*:

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Links/advadmin.htm>

Academic Advising Administration: Essential Knowledge and Skills for the 21st Century, NACADA monograph 22. Joslin, J. & Markee, N., co-editors. Available at <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Monographs/M22.htm>

This monograph is intended for new and veteran advising administrators interested in building outstanding advising units to serve the mission of their colleges and universities. Authors answer questions relevant to all administrators: “what would we have liked to know when we first began as administrators?” as well as “what do we need to know to lead our offices into the next century?” The challenges of beginning an administrative position and the equally important necessity of doing it well over time lend urgency to this monograph. The theme of resilience in the face of pressure and change is stressed in the pages of every chapter. This monograph offers knowledgeable insights for administrators who are newly promoted or hired and also offers depth and layers of meaning for veteran administrators who are ready to learn new approaches and sharpen their understanding of essential skills.

Comprehensive Advisor Training and Development: Practices that Deliver, NACADA monograph 21. Available at <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Monographs/M21.htm>

The second edition of the NACADA Advisor Training and Development Commission-sponsored monograph, **Comprehensive advisor training and development: Practices that deliver** replaces the best selling 2003 monograph *Advisor Training: Exemplary Practices in the Development of Advisor Skills* and features the expertise of more than 35 Commission members. Readers will not find a more complete collection of information and practical ideas for training and developing academic advisor skills and knowledge than in this monograph. Monograph authors not only lay the theoretical foundation of academic advisor training, but provide practical ideas for programming and suggest innovative methods for the delivery of content. This monograph contains the information training coordinators want and need to create or improve advisor training and development programs.

Key Issues for Academic Advising Administrators

A Panel Discussion



What do you see as the most important skills that advising administrators need?

Skills for Advising Administration

- Ability to manage people
- Concerted follow-through to staff on questions and requests
- Building campus relations
- Critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Ability to learn and embrace technology

Skills for Advising Administration

- Relationship & Communication competencies
- Lead, Manage & Act competencies
- Analyze, Evaluate & Assess competencies
- Design, Create, Envision & Conceptualize competencies

Skills for Advising Administration

- Holistic approach with attention to detail
- Ability to set ambitious yet realistic goals
- Ability to make decisions without alienating team members
- Teambuilding and mentoring skills
- Flexibility / ability to live with imperfection
- Mindset of striving for continuous improvement

Where do administrators go to get the skills they need?

Where to Attain Skills

Prior to appointment / hiring:

- Develop as faculty members, Assistant/Associate Directors, Lead/Senior Advisors, Teaching & Graduate Assistants
- Gain through programs, life experiences, mentoring/coaching relationships

Once appointed/hired:

- Workshops, research, formal programming, peer/mentoring relationships

Where to Attain Skills

- "Practice" the area that needs development
- Involvement in focused learning opportunities



Where to Attain Skills

- Reading
- Observation
- On-campus opportunities
- Personal coach / mentor
- Sharing with peers
- Professional conferences
- Formal programs

What do you see as the key issues that administrators deal with today?

Key Issues Today

- Increasing demands / decreasing resources
- Increased focus on data-driven decision making and accountability
- Continual changes in technology

Key Issues Today

- Communicating/advocating the role/value of advising to faculty and administrators
- Garnering support for advising and the advising profession
- Being effective in a constantly changing environment

Key Issues Today

- Assessment
- Funding
- Staff morale and support



What do you see as the key challenges that administrators will face in the future?

Future Challenges


- Having to keep on top of and foresee the influence of political, social, economic and legal forces on higher education
- Changes coming faster and faster necessitates need for increased flexibility

Future Challenges

- Development of creative, effective intentional advising initiatives
- Increasing use of technology in the advising process
- Maintaining a relevant, innovative academic advising center with decreasing budgets and resources

Future Challenges

- Technology management
- Budget & resource management
- Changing demographics of student populations



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