From the Editor

The authors of the articles presented in this issue of the NACADA Journal have committed themselves to the types of in-depth studies that are needed by critical-minded advisors to advance the field. Advisors interested in the long-term impact of their efforts will learn much about the student and advisor perceptions of advising experiences and how research can be used to assess the successfulness of programs.

In his third and final report, Mike Lynch delivers information on advisor perceptions of the field. The data, taken from the 2000 NACADA Survey, will prove interesting to all advisors because Lynch breaks down the information by type, size, and mission of institution and looks at the issues according to respondents’ position (faculty or professional), advising delivery method (centralized or decentralized), and by sponsoring unit (academic or administrative). Administrators will not want to miss the information Lynch presents on advisors’ perceptions of institutional support and their field-based suggestions for improved policy.

In the Smith as well as the Reinarz and Ehrlich articles, the scholars present unique studies on student perceptions of advising. However, the authors have not generated simplistic show-and-tell studies in which results are of limited generalizability at other institutions: They provide models for assessment that can be used by other professionals who want to get past the anecdotal and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs.

Joshua Smith looks at the oft neglected views of freshmen and fills a void in the current literature on student expectations and preferences for advising. Advisors interested in freshman advising will be interested in the strategies that were implemented based on his clearly articulated qualitative study; all advisors interested in how the expectations of emerging adults can impact advising delivery will want to read Smith’s article.

Alice Reinarz and Nathaniel Ehrlich explain their qualitative research of an advising program at the University of Michigan, thereby providing an example in how such surveys can be used as assessment tools respected by policy makers. They designed their survey to not only learn about the effects of advising on student behaviors and to engender appropriate change in practice but also as a means of demonstrating the value of advising to those setting institutional goals. As advisors become increasingly aware of the need to justify programs to stakeholders, even those uninitiated in assessment will see the value in the straightforward approach offered in the Reinarz and Ehrlich article.

Wes Habley introduced us to the fine work of Robert Szafran at Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas. We are pleased to offer for your consideration Szafran’s research on the effects of class load on freshman retention. Advisors will be challenged by Szafran’s conclusions that contradict popular strategies for first-year course selection.

Robert Abelman and Anthony Molina saw an opportunity to expand advisor understanding of those often considered most at risk for poor college performance and attrition: at-risk students with learning disabilities. Using data acquired through their style versus substance research (see their previous work in NACADA Journal issues 20(2) and 21 (1 & 2)), Abelman and Molina provide a post hoc analysis of intervention strategies applied to students with learning disabilities. They effectively argue that the attention received by students with learning disabilities is more effective in generating short-term gains in academic performance and persistence than is the nature of the intervention. The practical implications of the style versus substance series are sure to generate discussion about the effectiveness of current programs directed to those considered most at risk for leaving college.

The Advisor’s Toolbox is the forum for a follow-up article on solution-focused advising first presented by James Burg and Jennifer Mayhall in the 22(1) issue of the NACADA Journal. In the latest article, the authors offer specific strategies for undertaking solution-focused advising in a variety of advising situations. Through the presentation of advisor-advisee interactions, the authors demonstrate the counseling techniques that can be effectively applied to students struggling with critical and often difficult academic decisions. Both professional and faculty advisors are sure to find some useful suggestions in Burg and Mayhall’s article.

Do not forget to look through the regular NACADA Journal features: The Book Reviews, edited by Marsha Miller, and the Annotated Bibliography of Recent Research on Advising, summarized and compiled by George Steele and Melinda McDonald. These resources can be used to help professional and faculty advisors in reaching professional development goals, and we consider them integral parts of the NACADA Journal’s contribution to the field.

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