Significant Learning, Significant Advising

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The acknowledgment that advisees are learners and advisors are teachers may be the most powerful philosophical change in advising in 30 years. This article builds generally on the growing momentum to view academic advising as an extension of student learning, and specifically as an expansion of "Advising as Learning" in which Hemwall and Trachte (2005) argued that "learning as an organizing paradigm has profound implications" (p. 75). I develop this idea by applying Fink's (2003) learning paradigm to advising. The synergy in this paradigm can be harnessed to create advising that causes change in the advisee. Fink's method for developing opportunities for significant learning requires forethought and careful design when applied to the academic advising process.

KEY WORDS: advising approaches, advising as learning, advising curriculum, learning-centered paradigm, philosophy of advising, theory of advising

Relative emphasis: theory, practice, research

Introduction

In this article I build upon the growing momentum to view academic advising as an extension of student learning and specifically as an expansion of Hemwall and Trachte's (2005) *NACADA Journal* article entitled "Advising as Learning: 10 Organizing Principles" in which the authors argued that "learning as an organizing paradigm has profound implications" (p. 75). I develop this idea considerably, appropriating a relatively new learning paradigm from Fink (2003) for the advising process. Fink's method for developing opportunities for significant learning is then applied to the process of academic advising.

The current emphasis on student learning in American (and increasingly, international) higher education is often traced to Barr and Tagg's (1995) seminal article, which described the shift that was slowly taking place from the traditional instructional paradigm of education to a newer, learning-centered paradigm. They saw that the mission of higher education was "not instruction but rather that of producing learning with every student by whatever means work best" (p. 13). This shift did not just apply to the classroom alone: "Roles under the Learning Paradigm, then, begin to blur. Architects of campus buildings and payroll clerks alike will contribute to and shape the environments that empower student learning" (p. 24). In addition, "a college's purpose is not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems" (p. 15).

While change (for some!) has seemed slow, a growing number of authors have explored how the learning paradigm can be implemented throughout administrative units in the university, including academic advising. Even prior to Barr and Tagg's 1995 article, Ryan (1992, pp. 7-8) was arguing,

> As for students, ultimately the institution's goal should be to provide such an education that students leave the institution armed with the knowledge and skills needed to be active, articulate, and committed citizens who can provide new ideas, create and deal with change, and propose solutions to some of the political, social, and economic challenges we face. Advisors alone cannot empower students to achieve these ends. University-wide, classroom, peer, and personal learning experiences combine to form students' visions of what they are and what they can be. But advisors play an important part. Through their work they have a special teaching opportunity to model and discuss these possibilities and to challenge students to plan educational programs with an eye to future responsibilities. If advisors can accomplish these aims and assist students in moving toward those critical tasks, their work will have been worthwhile.

Weingartner (1993, pp. 113–14) stated that "to be effective, therefore, to insure that the possible becomes actual, undergraduate institutions must provide a kind of paraeducation if students are to benefit fully from proffered educational opportunities." Stromer (1994, p. 93) affirmed that "viewing advising as part of the current debate surrounding teaching and learning can also help clarify both its current failures and its potential." Lowenstein (1999) separated the developmental theory of advising content from the prescriptive style of advising and argued instead for a collaborative style of advising, which may vary in its con-

tent, and included within that content a model of advising he called "academically centered." Lowenstein (2005) considered the (now renamed as) learning-centered paradigm as a unique model of advising (separate and distinct from both prescriptive and developmental frameworks).

Appleby (2001a) stated that "The knowledge, skills, and characteristics displayed by effective teachers are essentially the same as those exhibited by effective advisers" and in a later article (2001b) described his attempts to incorporate active learning strategies into the advising process. Hemwall and Trachte (2003a, p. 13) claimed that

> In higher education, the idea of a learning paradigm has started to have profound implications. It calls into question many of the structures and practices that currently define postsecondary institutions. For example, under the learning paradigm, the classroom focus shifts from the teacher to the student learner. Educators ask, "What has the student learned?" rather than "What was the topic of instruction?" The learning paradigm prompts faculty members to become educated about how students learn and to evaluate student learning rather than teacher performance. The learning paradigm also challenges the traditional dichotomy that the job of the faculty is teaching and the task of the student is learning. Faculty members are not viewed as teachers but as educators who are expected to design classroom activities that promote student learning. . . . However, to adopt a learning paradigm, one must have more than a student-centered practice. He or she must explore the implications of the concept "learning."

Hemwall and Trachte (2003b, p. 8) contended that

> a learning paradigm can provide the needed tools for conceiving strategies that are most likely to promote positive student outcomes through advising. When educators focus on advising as learning, they can examine what and how the student learns rather than the role or duties of the advisor, the advising administrator, and the advising system. This perspective should also reveal ways of maximizing the learning potential of academic advising.

Hemwall and Trachte (2005) described the learning-centered paradigm as transformative and developed the idea of an advising curriculum based on student learning to "assist advisees in developing higher order thinking skills" (p. 74). Developing such thinking skills, however, requires a precise definition of those skills and the plans to measure and implement them. "To achieve a change of focus requires, then, the answering of two questions: What should the students learn through advising, and how might the learning take place?" (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005, p. 75)

The learning process itself has undergone considerable scrutiny in the last few decades. Numerous models of learning have been developed in the 20th century, including Bloom's (1956) hierarchical sequence of cognitive levels, Krathwohl's (1964) theories about affective behavior, Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy, Harrow's (1972) description of the levels of psychomotor learning, the Edmonds Learning Style Identification Exercise (Reinert, 1976), Vygotsky's (1930/1978) zones of proximal development, Gardner's (1983/2003) theories of multiple intelligences, Kolb's (1984) four-stage learning cycle, Mezirow's (1991) transformative theories of adult learning, and so forth. In 2003, Fink published *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. In this book, Fink examined the essential role that course design plays in creating extraordinary learning opportunities. While the phrase "significant learning" has become a catchword in much of today's pedagogical literature, its meaning is often ill defined. Fink believes that significant learning causes change in the learners themselves (pp. 29, 56). Fink's exploration of how changes are caused in learners led him to develop this new paradigm of significant learning.

Fink's book is an outgrowth of his quarter century of experience in faculty development and instructional consultation. His paradigm of significant learning has served as an important catalyst for discussion on the elements that constitute extraordinary learning and its potential design at a time when student learning has become increasingly scrutinized. His book has been strongly received by the educational community, hailed as "an inspiring yet eminently practical strategy for teachers" (Chaffee, 2004, p. 266), "one [of] the most helpful texts to appear in recent years on transformative teaching and learning" (Ratke, 2005, p. 190), and "an exciting and important book" with "the potential to have a major impact on helping faculty and institutions take the art and craft of teaching to the next level" (Cox, 2004, p. 286). His theories have become a staple for faculty developers, and Fink himself has become a much sought-after clinician.

Significant Learning

Fink recognized the usefulness of Bloom's (1956) traditional (cognitive) content-centered learning taxonomy. Bloom's taxonomy is a hierarchical ordering of six types of learning that are all based on a student's ability to manipulate and restate learned content. In the hierarchy, knowledge is at the lowest level of learning and the steps up to the highest levels of learning are as follows: comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Fink proposed a new taxonomy that emphasizes multiple dimensions of learning. These dimensions transcend the content-centered focus of Bloom's theory and address the need to give expression to types of learning, such as the development of character, leadership, the ability to teach oneself, and more; these types of learning are echoed in both the developmental advising and advising-as-learning models. Content (which Fink calls "foundational knowledge") becomes just one of six major categories of significant learning, which also include application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn. These categories can be briefly described as follows (Fink, 2003, pp. 30-32):

Foundational knowledge describes understanding and remembering specific information and ideas. This type of learning provides a basic apprehension of a particular subject.

Application means learning how to engage in some new type of intellectual, physical, or social action. It allows the other types of learning to be useful.

Integration involves connecting learned material with other ideas, people, or realms of life. This type of learning allows students to draw parallels and connections between ideas or actions that may have initially seemed disparate. It strengthens the web of meaning through interrelatedness.

Human dimension refers to learning important information about oneself or others. It allows students to discover personal and social implications for their studies.

Caring involves developing new feelings, interests, and values. This type of learning allows students to interact with the subject on a personal level and thus create new energy and enthusiasm for learning.

Learning how to learn means becoming a better student by learning to be inquisitive and self-directed. It is important because it allows students to become lifelong learners and to engage in future studies with greater effectiveness and efficiency.

These types of learning are interactive, rather than hierarchical, and create a synergy whereby each type of learning enhances the others. See Figure 1.

The stereotypical lecture-driven course teaches students only foundational knowledge and ignores the other types of learning. Academic advising can also be overly focused on foundational knowledge. Stromer (1994, pp. 93–94) stated:

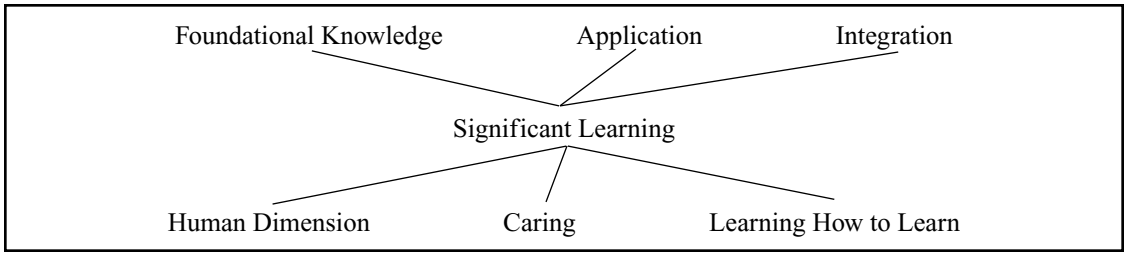
> Like classroom faculty, advisors tend to think more in terms of telling and showing students something than in structuring ways to actively engage students in learning and doing. To solve student problems, we design brochures and fliers, rewrite catalog copy, and create checklists and degree audit programs. . . . Like faculty who lecture, we often serve as givers of information, fountains of wisdom filling empty vessels.

However, the advisor can be much more than a vessel-filler. Fink's paradigm provides the opportunity to make advising truly significant.

Significant Advising

I believe the synergy in Fink's (2003) model can be harnessed to create an environment that produces truly significant advising—defined as advising that causes *change* in the advisee. For example, Hemwall and Trachte's (2005) excellent principles for developing a curriculum for academic advising fall almost seamlessly into Fink's paradigm. The first four of Hemwall and Trachte's principles match up with the following of Fink's ele-

Figure 1 Fink's taxonomy of significant learning (2003, p. 33)



ments of significant learning:

> Principle 1: Academic advising should facilitate student learning about the mission of the college (p. 76)—*foundational knowledge*.
> Principle 2: Academic advising should facilitate learning of both lower- and higher-order thinking skills (p. 76)—*integration and learning how to learn*.
> Principle 3: Academic advising should facilitate student learning about the means of achieving the goals imbedded in the institution's mission statement and closely related documents (p. 76)—*application and caring*.
> Principle 4: Academic advisors should view students as actively constructing their understanding of the mission of the institution, including concepts like becoming responsible citizens, liberally educated persons, and critical thinkers (p. 77)—*human dimension.*

Each of Hemwall and Trachte's 10 principles resonates with one or more of Fink's categories of significant learning. If advising is seen through the lens of Fink's interactive categories of significant learning, one can recognize a role for each of these types of learning in the advising process.

Foundational Knowledge

The amount of foundational knowledge that students need to know within the advising process is quite broad. Students must understand and remember specific information about degree programs, general educational requirements, course rotations and prerequisites, and the registration process. In a perfect world, advisees would also understand and remember plagiarism policies, add-drop procedures, petitions processes, how to figure a grade-point average (GPA), and so forth.

Application

Once students have gained a foundational knowledge of practices and procedures, they must put that knowledge to work through application. Students must not only know about course requirements for graduation, they must also register for, take, and pass those courses! Many advisors have experienced the frustration of dealing with advisees who have understood the foundational knowledge surrounding an issue but were seemingly unable to apply that knowledge in a way that enhances their academic success.

Integration

Students must learn to connect the curriculum of their program (major, minor, elective, and general studies courses) with their overall educational and career goals. If students understand the interconnectedness of their academic programs, they can draw parallels between curricular content that may at first seem disparate.

Human Dimension

Developing an academic career is a self-defining moment that is often reached only after great struggle. Advisors have the opportunity to help students gain an understanding about themselves apart from parental or societal pressures to pursue certain majors and careers. Advising can play a powerful role in this type of learning.

Caring

The very best advisors are able to help their advisees interact with the curriculum on a personal level, creating an energy and enthusiasm for the student's role in determining her or his own academic destiny. The students simply learn to care about their academic development.

Learning How to Learn

Advisees need to learn how to learn their curriculum, assess their progress in courses, and evaluate their response to their chosen major. Understanding how to educate oneself about career and major choices can lead to an advisee becoming self-directed, more effective in future advising sessions, and better able to navigate through career changes in the future.

An advising session that produced each of these types of learning would be extraordinary. In reality, this type of interaction will not occur in every advising session and may not occur at all if careful thought is not given to creating the opportunity for such learning to happen. As Stromer (1994, p. 92) stated,

> In the real hours of real days advising often becomes whatever can be done to get through most expediently. Faculty and professional advisors alike attempt to serve ever-growing numbers of students whose diverse needs have increased with their numbers. Notwithstanding the genuine helpfulness of many advisors to many students—help in averting disaster, help in discovering new resources, help in increasing self-esteem or self-awareness—more often than not, advisors' days record missed opportunities and unexplored possibilities. Most advisors recognize the difference between

prescriptive advising and developmental and espouse the latter, but when five students are standing outside the door eager to register for next semester's classes before all seats are occupied and the advisor must attend a meeting in 15 minutes, prescribing is often what occurs.

Developing opportunities for significant learning to take place during the advising session takes forethought and careful design.

Design for Success

Stromer (1994, p. 94) stated,

> As a facilitator of academic planning, the advisor can empower students to transform the possibilities of higher education into actual, useful knowledge, skills, and experience. Given this view, advising is of critical importance. We need, therefore, to be clear about defining achievable goals and objectives.

Fink's (2003) paradigm for significant learning is simply the prelude to a three-stage model for course design that enables faculty members to better ensure consistency between their learning goals and the flow of classroom activities. The model can be readily applied to the advising process and helps to provide a framework by which opportunities for significant learning can be designed. Note that although the model is presented as a series of steps, the process (at least for me) is usually quite recursive, with fluid movement between steps, especially within each stage.

Initial Stage

Step 1: identify the situational factors. What factors will limit the ways in which the advising sessions are designed? Are multiple advisees seen at one time or is each met one-on-one? How much time is spent with each advisee? Is the academic time frame based on a semester, quarter, or other type of academic time frame? Is the staff comprised of faculty members or professional advisors? What kinds of students are advised? The needs of a third-year pre-law NCAA Division I athlete, for example, may be very different from those of a first-year undecided student in a small liberal-arts college. Situational factors also include the type of advising environment and the resources available as well as the advisor's and advisee's personalities.

Collins's (2001, p. 70) seminal book, *Good to Great*, explores the idea of facing the truth:

> When . . . you start with an honest and diligent effort to determine the truth of the situation, the right decisions often become self-evident. Not always, of course, but often. And even if all decisions do not become self-evident, one thing is certain: You absolutely cannot make a series of good decisions without first confronting the brutal facts.

In a perfect academic-advising world, oodles of professionally trained staff (or oodles of wholly committed faculty advisors) would have time to prepare carefully for each 30 to 60 minute student meeting and would have students who memorized their college catalog and graciously and fastidiously followed the advice of their advisor (having come to the office 3 weeks prior to the registration deadline just to make sure they had time to fully digest the information they were given). I know of no such world! All advisors, regardless of institutional affiliation, struggle with the rhythms of the academic season, insufficient staffs, student malaise, and a host of other factors.

The first step in Fink's (2003) model gives advisors a chance to explore thoughtfully the limitations under which they may be working. If advisors are committed to creating change in students as a result of advising, they must recognize their own brutal facts. At most institutions, for example, it is unrealistic to expect to work on any type of learning other than foundational knowledge during the first week of classes in the fall semester because of the hectic nature of the add-drop period.

However, Fink's (2003) first step is not just about identifying limitations. The structure of academic advising programs should also be designed with recognition of each institution's unique identity, and it should work within and support the strategic goals and missions of its schools and colleges. The learning goals that are formulated (step 2) must be based on the strengths, as well as the weaknesses, of the students and the academic programs each institution offers.

Step 2: formulate significant learning goals. What should advisees remember? What is MOST important? If significant advising is defined as that which causes change in the learner, what changes should advisees exhibit?

This step is best accomplished by reexamining Fink's (2003) categories of significant learning. The content of foundational knowledge is usually self-evident: Students need to know the curriculum as well as the policies and procedures required for their individual programs. Less evident is the learning that advisors wish to foster in the other cate-

gories, which will to a great extent depend on the factors identified in the first step of the paradigm. What would be the most significant goal regarding human dimension? Caring? Integration? It is important to develop a vision—recognizing the situational factors—for advisee development as they progress through the advising process.

Two personal examples are relevant in explaining step 2. I have had the pleasure of advising in a number of settings, both as faculty and as professional staff. In one of the situations, I served as a member of a professional staff in a large, research I institution that required most first-time students to enter through a college that was dedicated solely to first-year students and their experiences. One of the goals for our academic advising center was for students to learn how to investigate the great diversity of academic careers available to students at the university and for them to learn how to prepare for their own shifting attitudes regarding major and career; both of these objectives exemplify goals for Fink's (2003) learning-how-to-learn category.

A few years later, I found myself a faculty member in a music department at a mid-sized public institution that relied on faculty advising. I still felt that student ability to learn how to learn was critical, but my focus was different: I was interested in making sure my advisees knew how to educate themselves about potential jobs in the field of music, the pitfalls of burnout in their vocation, and even how to learn about the local politics in the environments in which they were to work. The goal was again learning how to learn, but because the situational factors were different, so were the specific learning goals.

Step 3: design measures of feedback and assessment. Great teaching demands that assessment of one's learning outcomes is undertaken regularly and accurately. The advisor must do the same; that is, he or she needs to find ways to measure whether or not the advisees have learned the material the advisor set out for them to master. In addition, advisees need a system of feedback that alerts them to their progress regarding the advisor's learning goals. This assessment and feedback cycle can be informal or formal, and it may consist of self-assessment by the students.

Angelo and Cross (1993, p. 3) claimed that faculty members benefit from classroom assessment, and their contention is applicable to advisors as well:

> Through close observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students' learning, and the design of modest classroom experiments, classroom teachers can learn much about how students learn and, more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom Assessment [*sic*] helps individual college teachers obtain useful feedback on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective.

Once learning goals have been set, it is important to find ways to measure them. The ubiquitous teaching evaluation often comes under fire for measuring characteristics other than student learning (such as student satisfaction, student engagement, or instructor personality), and likewise advisors must be careful to develop measures that truly assess the student's achievement of the advisor's learning goals. Bubble-sheet evaluations can reveal important details about the advising process, but more creative solutions are generally required to evaluate fully the degree to which learning goals are being met. Fink (2003) stated that effective (he called it "educative") assessment consists of four basic components. First, the assessment is forward looking and is based on performance on the last task as a way to determine how the advisee can improve for the next one. Second, the assessment has clear and appropriate criteria and standards for evaluating student performance on the learning goals established in step 2. Third, the students should be taught to engage in self-assessment. Fourth, feedback from the assessment should be given to the student frequently, immediately, discriminatingly, and lovingly (Fink, 2003, p. 100).

Assessment of advising has not been nearly as formalized as assessment of teaching in the classroom. It is, however, a necessary step in establishing procedures that lead to significant learning in advisees. For example, if one of the learning-how-to-learn goals is for advisees to understand the ways to conduct research on various career options, what means could be designed to measure and provide feedback about the students' progress? The career center might be able to provide data on those using their resources and how well prepared the students seem to be for life after graduation. A post-graduate survey might provide information on how well advisees were able to negotiate changes in their real-world careers. A simple questionnaire might measure student responses to the question "What would you do if you lost your job today

and needed to find a new career?" In the end, good assessment procedures "are capable of supporting and furthering the learning process itself while still providing the teacher and the learner with information about how well the student is learning" (Fink, 2003, p. 101).

Step 4: generate teaching and learning activities. Having completed the above steps, the advisor is faced with two questions: "What will the advisees actually do, and what will I do, to make significant types of advising happen?" The advisor must design the opportunities for change to occur in advisees.

The types of activities advisors might ask of advisees are endless. Indeed, advisors have an advantage over most classroom teachers in that some of the activities have an immediate and practical application, such as course registration or the filing of petitions. Advisors work with advisees in the real world where real consequences await their actions. In other words, advisees are asked to work with original data (their GPA, the course listings, etc.) to complete real jobs (register for appropriate courses, etc.). However, advisors also may be able to incorporate observation, secondary readings, case studies, simulations, role plays, stories, videos, printed materials, Web resources, and more to design activities that will help students to learn critically (Fink, 2003, p. 108). A well-designed role-playing activity on prejudice and intolerance, for example, might teach a student far more about the feelings of others (the human dimension and caring categories of Fink's significant learning paradigm) than having that student read the statement on harassment in the student handbook. Many examples of such activities exist (and often appear in the pages of this journal). The activities should, however, clearly reflect the learning goals established in step 2 of this process.

Step 5: integrate the primary components. Step 5 is reflective and critical. Do steps 2, 3, and 4 support and reflect each other? Are they integrated? Do they reflect the realities of the situation as identified in step 1? If not, then the process needs to be reshaped and refined until one can answer these questions in the affirmative.

Intermediate Stage

In the intermediate stage, the primary components are organized into a comprehensive plan for learning. As such, it concerns itself with structuring the learning activities into a progression of learning events developed around the rhythms of the semester. As with the first stage, the steps of the intermediate stage are recursive, and in my own designs, I freely float between the steps.

Step 6: create an integrated plan. Advisors should examine the rhythms of the academic period, from both a long- and short-term perspective, and create an integrated plan for how to introduce the various types of learning opportunities to advisees. Within the semester or quarter, when are the advisors likely to see advisees and what will the advisees need? Through the course of their entire academic career, when are advisees likely to see their advisor and what will they need? The goal is to sequence the learning opportunities through time so that they build on one another in a way that allows students to integrate each new idea with the preceding ones.

The challenge—and the opportunity—is that the advisor often has the same advisee over the course of many semesters, perhaps even through their entire academic career. The opportunity for planning, therefore, extends beyond just the rhythms of the semester. Lowenstein's (2005, p. 69) proposed advising curriculum stands as an excellent starting point for examining the picture of an integrated plan in academic advising:

> Learning transpires when a student makes sense of his or her overall curriculum just as it does when a person understands an individual course, and the former is every bit as important as the latter. In fact, learning in each individual course is enhanced by the learning of the curriculum and thus may continue long after the course has been completed. Finally, whereas the individual course is the domain of the professor, the overall curriculum is most often the domain of the academic advisor, and the excellent advisor coaches the student through the process of learning the curriculum.

The academic curriculum is one important element that advisees may learn, but the advising curriculum might also include learning leadership skills, tolerance, time management, and more. Students cannot learn everything at once, however, so the order in which advisors structure activities must be planned. Students should probably learn how to use the on-line registration system in the first semester, but learning how their upper-level major courses interrelate to one another can probably be achieved over time through the first several years. For example, if one of the learning goals is "students will learn how to manage their time," then what sequence of events within the advisee's academic career might facilitate this goal? Perhaps the first step is to introduce time management as a topic in an Introduction to the

University course or through special workshops provided by the advising center. However, this class is often insufficient for many students. What could advisors design in the second and third semesters to help students learn the value of time management? The result of step 6 is an outline of activities that are structured through time to bring advisees to a particular learning goal.

Step 7: select an effective advising strategy. Arrange the individual learning activities into an effective advising strategy—that is, a particular combination of learning activities in a particular sequence. The goal is to find a combination and sequence of learning activities that work together synergistically and build a high level of student energy that can be applied to the task of learning. Whereas step 6 is meant for an examination of learning activities in relationship to the rhythms of the semester or academic career, step 7 is used to examine learning activities in relationship to each other.

If the advisor designs a time-management activity for a third-semester advisee—such as asking her or him to create an hourly record of activities for a typical week—the advisor needs to make sure that the task progresses logically from activities designed for the first 2 semesters. If the hourly record had been required each of the first 3 semesters, for example, it would give the advisor and advisee a chance to compare how the student's time needs had changed from the first semester and might result in deeper learning than a single-time exercise completed the first semester as part of an introductory course. Advisors also need to make sure the assignment is integrated with other activities that have been planned to help students reach other learning goals. In this way, tasks can be designed that compliment each other, even to the point of addressing multiple learning objectives with a single activity. Steps 6 and 7 are the most difficult in some respects, for they force the advisor to bring the theoretical possibilities defined in the initial stage into an actual plan of implementation.

Step 8: integrate the intermediate components. This step provides another opportunity for reflection and critique. Do steps 6 and 7 complement each other? Do they provide both the micro- and the macro-plan for organizing learning opportunities through advising? Do they support the principles generated during the initial steps of development? Do they adequately account for the situational factors first identified?

Concluding Stage

The initial stage allows for the thoughtful creation of learning goals and the activities that will lead to their fulfillment. The intermediate stage allows for the thoughtful application and integration of those goals into a structured academic-advising curriculum. The concluding stage brings together three staples of classroom instruction: grades, the syllabus, and the instructor evaluation. While these elements are not often associated with academic advising, their relevance to significant advising should not be underestimated.

Step 9: put together the grading system. This is perhaps the stage in Fink's (2003) model that is most difficult to adapt to the advising process. In the classroom, evaluation of student learning is usually linked in some way to a system of grades. Failure to achieve in the class results in a failing grade. In advising, failure in student learning usually results in an outcome that is more pragmatic and concrete than a poor grade. Failure to learn the ins and outs of class registration, for example, can result in late registration and a less-than-perfect schedule. Advisees need to have feedback on their progress in terms of the learning goals, but that is covered in step 3 of Fink's (2003) model. Few advisors (if any) are required to issue grades that indicate a student's progress in academic advising.

Step 10: identify and proactively address problems. It is always good, before implementing it, to give any organizational design one final check and review. Are there any operational problems that can be identified and corrected ahead of time?

Step 11: write the syllabus. In a class, the syllabus communicates the design of the course to the students and sets the tone for communicating facts important to the instructor. In the field of advising, advisees benefit from having a sense of the most important aspects of advising sessions. A document—whether or not called a syllabus—should clearly state the expectations and learning goals advisors have for their advisees. Such a document would also spell out the responsibilities of both advisor and advisee as well as provide the rationale for the structure of the activities that are required from the students. Much of this information is often articulated in advising or student handbooks and would be readily transferable to an advising syllabus.

Step 12: evaluate the advising process and skills. Assessment of student learning is developed in step 3, which involves assessment of the individual advisor. Every advising session provides an opportunity for the advisor to learn about oneself. To take advantage of this opportunity to learn and grow, the advisor needs to plan a thorough evaluation of the

advising process and the skills brought to it. Therefore, information gathering should not be limited to periodically issued fill-in-the-bubble evaluations, but data should be collected in a variety of meaningful ways—through student focus groups, peer evaluation, and open-ended student questionnaires. I have often learned more from surveys that ask advisees "What do you like best about our advising sessions" and "What would you most like to change about our advising sessions" than I have from more traditional 5-point Likert-scale questionnaires.

Conclusion

I find no small importance in the fact that even Crookston (1972, p. 13) recognized that

> the developmental relationship is based on different values and principles. The most important of these is the belief that the relationship itself is one in which the academic advisor and the student differentially engage in a series of developmental tasks, the successful completion of which results in varying degrees of learning by both parties.

The acknowledgment that advisees are learners and advisors are teachers may be the most powerful philosophical change in advising in 30 years. If this philosophical shift has merit (as I believe it does), then perhaps we should abandon the prescriptive-developmental advising polarity and instead focus on the broad possibilities offered by Fink's (2003) paradigm, for it allows room for both prescriptive advising (foundational knowledge) and its developmental counterpart (through such learning categories as application and human dimension). If advisors want significant learning—*change*—to take place within advisees, then they should actively design opportunities for change to occur. Fink's model provides a guide for implementing this design and is just one of the many exciting developments in the field of teaching and learning that might be applied successfully to academic advising.

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