The National Academic Advising Association: A Brief Narrative History

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Introduction

It is with great pride and a sense of promise that NACADA provides the membership with its first official monograph. We are proud of what we have accomplished as a national professional association in just over a decade, and we will strive to serve the membership continuously through various publication means.

The Monograph Committee was conceived and established by Gary Kramer during his presidency. Although this series of publications is intended to stimulate action in new areas of academic advising practice and research, as well as to provide contemporary viewpoints regarding the many facets of academic advising and the Association, we have chosen to inaugurate the series with this historical overview.

J. D. Beatty, NACADA’s archivist, had set out on this project prior to the creation of the Committee. It seemed only natural to capture his work and begin this new series with a view of how we got this far and to acknowledge the strong base upon which we can build our future positions and actions. Thus, “The National Academic Advising Association: A Brief Narrative History” is the initial publication sponsored by the NACADA Monograph Committee.

I join the Association’s current and past officers, and the many other contributors to this project, in trusting that you will enjoy the casual style of J. D. Beatty’s informal history. We are certain that you will sense the same pride in the development of your professional association that we have rediscovered in providing you this brief, but rich, historical perspective.

Thomas J. Grites
Chair Monograph Committee

Foreword

During their earliest meetings, the NACADA leadership vigorously debated the Association’s name, finally settling upon the National Academic Advising Association. I have chosen to emphasize the Association over individuals in many situations important to NACADA’s past, as well as its future, in the belief that the membership’s commitment is to academic advising as a process rather than to individual academic advisors. On the other hand, I openly state my respect for those many, many leaders, some of whom operated behind the scenes but were still instrumental to the Association’s eventual success, whose contributions were clearly given without consideration for personal gain or ego gratification. These contributions, given in this manner, could well serve as a metaphor for the advisor’s contribution to the advisee’s education. What follows is a brief narrative history of the National Academic Advising Association.

NACADA is professionals helping professionals—professionally, socially, and emotionally. The Association’s original statement of purpose is as true today as it was at NACADA’s creation:

The purpose of the National Academic Advising Association is to promote the quality of Academic Advising in institutions of higher education, and to this end, it is dedicated to the support and professional growth of academic advising and advisors.

NACADA serves its constituency—faculty members, administrators, counselors, and others concerned with the intellectual, personal, and vocational needs of students.

It is the forum for discussion, debate, and the exchange of ideas regarding academic advising. It is the means to nurture cooperation and coordination of academic advising with other areas and activities of higher education. And NACADA is the representative and advocate of academic advising and academic advisors to higher education.

The Beginnings: 1977-79

SCENE: April, 1977. A hotel elevator in Denver, Colorado. The door closes, and the elevator begins to move. A man is reading a flyer over a woman’s shoulder. The flyer announces “The First National Conference on Academic Advising.” The man and woman are both attending the American College Personnel Association Conference; he is presenting two sessions on academic advising and asks about her flyers for the conference. She answers by saying that she is planning to attend his sessions and asks permission to distribute her flyers. He agrees. The elevator stops, its door opens, and the man and...
woman part.

This meeting, whether by chance or fate’s grand design, introduced NACADA’s first two presidents. The woman was Toni Trombley; the man was Tom Grites. Much came from their meeting and others’ great expectations.

When Toni Trombley was hired to direct academic advising services, neither she nor the University of Vermont could have fully imagined the results of that shared commitment to academic advising. When asked to reflect upon education’s often turbulent years during the 70s, Toni explained that she saw academic advising as something that could have a verifiable impact upon students whose daily lives were often filled as much with the unreal and surreal as with the real. Her desire to define academic advising and her persuasiveness convinced her institution to host the first National Conference on Academic Advising.

Her purpose in organizing the conference was multifaceted. She hoped to identify colleagues. Who were they? Where were they? What were they doing, and how successfully were they doing it? Did they know if they were, in fact, making a difference? How did they know? What were their prescriptions for successful academic advising programs? Toni Trombley also hoped the first conference could lay a foundation upon which to build a description of the academic advising process. She hoped that the status of academic advising could be enhanced within the expectation and reward system for faculty. The conference grew out of her commitment to meeting a need—the need for personal and professional growth.

NACADA has continued Toni’s commitment, and, for the last thirteen years, has tried to offer its membership a broad range of professional services. But, most of all, it has attempted to provide colleagues with opportunities to share professional and personal aspirations and frustrations with the always-present goal of developing strategies to improve the educational experience of our students. By improving the educational experience of our students, we in turn improve the quality of life on our campuses and the identity and recognition of our individual contributions to the field of academic advising.

The University of Vermont, with Toni’s leadership, succinctly stated its purpose in sponsoring the first National Conference on Academic Advising:

We at the University of Vermont recognize the need for an opportunity to share and discuss relevant issues concerning academic advising.

In order to meet this need, we are sponsoring the first National Conference on Academic Advising for those individuals associated with any aspect of an academic advising system. This conference is directed toward faculty, administrators, and advisors in higher education who have common concerns related to academic advising. Our goal is to provide an opportunity for participants to learn from others, as well as share information which they feel will make academic advising a more viable and accountable system.

And, as they say, the rest is history. On October 17-19, 1977, in Burlington, Vermont, nearly 275 educators gathered to share their enthusiasm for, frustration with, and commitment to the improvement of academic advising. The conference foreshadowed future successes, which would include a national association, a refereed journal on academic advising, a newsletter, a consultant bureau, commissions and task forces on current issues in the profession, a set of standards, an ERIC descriptor, a resume bank and placement service, an awards program, and the establishment of a national executive administrative office. In addition, the Burlington conference laid the foundation for a succession of annual national and regional conferences.

Any organization ultimately defines itself by the quality of its membership and its principles. The executive steering committee that evolved from the first national conference was a veritable “Who’s Who” of academic advising. . . .

The executive steering committee, chaired by Toni Trombley, formed task forces between the 1977 and 1978 conferences to develop an organizational structure and bylaws, to plan for future conferences and conference sites, and to settle on a system for regional planning and membership development. It also proposed the NACADA acronym.

An essential feature of the time and an enduring organizational principle of NACADA is the Association’s dedication to advising rather than advisors, the purpose being to emphasize the broader process and function and to view advising as a professional discipline. Advising was selected over advisement because the latter is a term associated with the legal profession. The Association was officially named at the second national conference in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1978. It was incorporated in the State of Vermont in May of 1979, and its bylaws were ratified at the third national conference in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1979. The first membership drive yielded 429 charter members, 102 of whom
still hold membership.

The first Executive Cabinet, elected in October 1979, included Toni Trombley, President; Joan Mitchell, Vice President; Billie Jacobini, Secretary; and Frank Dyer, Jr., Treasurer. The Cabinet was assisted by the other members of the first official Board of Directors: Reginald Browne, Thomas Grites, Wes Habley, Marilou Healey, David Hershiser, Edward Jones, Peggy King, Margaret Ann Landry, Michael McCauley, Joe Metz, Joan Nelson, Wennette Pegues, Bruce Potter, Dan Wesley, and Mike Williamson as an ex-officio member representing the Kansas State University Conference Office.

A newsletter was established in 1979 with Billie Jacobini as editor, and Ed Jones later became the first Journal editor, producing his first issue in 1981.

With an official name, incorporation papers, a newsletter, and a journal, the Association was asked to “go logo.” Members proposed designs, and Janice Yates from Southern Illinois University/Carbondale submitted the winning proposal.

NACADA has traditionally stood for commitment to the process of advising and to the visibility of the advising profession, but its members are professionals (whether faculty or full-time advisors) whose first love is people. A theme woven through its beginnings and into its adolescent years has been one of people helping people. Advisor-advisee relationships, advisor-advisor relationships, advisor-administrator relationships, and relationships among NACADA members are all important features of the Association’s strength. On every occasion when members are asked to reflect upon why NACADA has been important to them or to explain its beginnings and into its adolescent years has been one of people helping people. Advisor-advisee relationships, advisor-advisor relationships, advisor-administrator relationships, and relationships among NACADA members are all important features of the Association’s strength. On every occasion when members are asked to reflect upon why NACADA has been important to them or to explain the primary sources of fond memories, people always appears somewhere in their responses.

NACADA’s history reflects successes and frustrations. When “people persons” get together, they not only interact in a variety of ways, but their successes and frustrations also take on dramatic texture. In those early steering committee discussions, the strong voices agreed on certain principles as intensely as they disagreed on others.

On the agreement side, there was unanimity about the needs. Eager participants had been turned away from the first national conference because of facilities limitations. In fact, two future NACADA presidents were unable to attend the Burlington conference. There was also agreement on the need for future annual conferences, bylaws, and the evolution of systematic methods to select members for leadership positions, as well as general agreement on the need to develop geographic regions for the purpose of managing membership and meeting the needs of various regions.

On the other hand, there were strong and differing opinions voiced concerning the issue of national versus regional conference organization and the need for some type of system to prevent large institutions from gaining leadership advantages over the smaller public and private institutions.

Much discussion centered upon whether the newly incorporated Association should quickly develop a regional conference system and build regional loyalties versus maintaining a national conference emphasis and national identity. Tom Grites, NACADA’s second president, feared that a too-rapid regional growth could damage the national identity of the Association and cited similar problems with associations such as the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Academic Affairs Administrators (ACAFAD), where ACAFAD’s regional arms hold strength over their national counterpart. With leadership from Grites, the Association focused upon developing a strong national identity first. As the Association grew out of childhood, regional conferences and activities were no longer viewed as potential threats. By 1988 every region had begun annual conferences, and each region has continued to hold them ever since.

Another issue that has been debated throughout NACADA’s history is the role, purpose, and necessity of institutional representatives. Initially, some feared takeovers by the large institutions. Others argued that there were genuine differences in the needs of members at different types of institutions and that NACADA’s national future depended upon being inclusive rather than exclusive. But problems of classification arose. Which category should one choose if her or his institution was over 25,000, private, and church affiliated? Should everyone at a particular institution be put into a category or allowed to select individually, given the person’s own needs? The questions grew more complex when nominations for elected positions and awards programs sometimes involved candidates from the same institution, but who in fact saw themselves representing different institutional categories. The Association has been assessing potential solutions to this problem since 1983 and recently adopted the Carnegie Classification System.

Every organization must govern itself systematically and with agreed-upon principles. The bylaws debate demonstrated the Association’s commitment to both concepts and simultaneously demonstrated the early leaders’ goal of keeping the Association as open and flexible as possible.

Strong opinions were voiced by members of
the bylaws committee, opinions exposed through
correspondence and debate. Mike McCauley
chaired the initial committee. A number of issues
were hammered out and ultimately agreed upon but
in many cases by split votes, again demonstrating
the steering committee’s commitment to the goal of
developing an association dedicated to improving
the quality of academic advising.

At the 1979 Omaha conference a floor debate
arose over a plan to mandate that a certain per-
centage of the Association’s leadership be minor-
ity members. It was a complicated problem because
the board vacancies were elected, not appointed, and
therefore depended upon independent nominations
and constituent balloting. The debate was con-
cluded with agreement that a bylaws amendment be
proposed at the next national meeting that would
clearly state the Association’s commitment to affir-
mative action in filling leadership positions. The
amendment never was passed, but the Association’s
commitment to cultural diversity both on the board
and in the membership was and is held strongly.

The Omaha conference also witnessed strong
support for limiting meeting sites to those states that
had ratified the Equal Rights Amendment.

The most interesting aspect of all these differ-
ing opinions is that even though they were strongly
held and forcefully debated, the participants never
lost sight of the common goal that had originally
brought them together for the purpose of helping
one another to improve their professional and per-
sonal lot.

The first three national conference themes par-
allel developmental theory as well as action plan-
ning. The Association has been able to anticipate
change and to design strategies to improve the
quality of education holistically by assisting students
and their institutions to better understand each
other. Advising is a multidimensional activity.

When one analyzes the national conference themes, one notes how clearly Toni Trombley’s
first presidential address at Omaha in 1979 fore-
shadowed the evolving definition of academic
advising as well as cultivated the seeds from
Burlington and Memphis. In her address, Dr.
Trombley asserted a definition of academic advis-
ing that has evolved from concept to practice over
the past eleven years. She asserted the following:

1. Advising has measurable impact upon stu-
   dents.
2. Advising must be recognized within the insti-
   tution.
3. Advising must have well-articulated goals.
4. Components and criteria for quality advis-
   ing must and can be isolated for the purposes
   of research, improvement, and evaluation.
5. Research is essential to discover new advis-
   ing methods and to improve present methods.
6. Central coordination of advising is necessary
to prevent fragmentation and to maintain
advising excellence.

The Burlington (1977) and Memphis (1978)
conferences focused upon impact and how advis-
ing makes a difference. Conference sessions
addressed issues such as development and imple-
mentation of successful academic advising pro-
grams, development of advising models, changing
roles, advisor training, assessment, nontraditional
students, advisor handbooks, advising/orienta-
tion/retention linkages, peer advising, manage-
ment of advising services, advising minority
students, faculty and professional advisors, com-
puter-assisted advising, advising and career devel-
opment, and advising special student populations
(e.g., adult students, honors students, preprofes-
sional students). The keynotes—Thomas Jones
at Burlington and Alexander Astin, David Crockett
and Donald Carson, and N. T. Winston at
Memphis—all outlined ways that advising can
and does make a difference.

When the Association hosted its first official
conference in Omaha (1979), it looked forward. The
80s held great promise, but that promise was accom-
panied by threats: potential enrollment decline,
problems with a professional identity for advis-
ing, fears that advising could be caught in an eth-
ical dilemma of retention economics (scheduling
that kept students enrolled but overlooked quality
control and progress toward degree), and “fire-
fights” among faculty, professional advisors, and
counseling centers about what advising should be,
who should do it and who does it best. John Holland
addressed the integration of academic advising and
career development theory, another seed that was
to blossom during the 80s. And at the same con-
ference a panel of college administrators—Collette
Mahoney, President of Marymount Manhattan
College; Donald Mash, Vice President for Student
Affairs at George Mason University; and Robert
Glennen, Vice President for Academic Affairs at the
University of Nevada, Las Vegas—discussed ways
that advising was making a difference on their
campuses. The panel represented the traditional
triad of leadership on campuses and likely was the
first time such a leadership group had focused on
academic advising.
The beginnings demonstrated enormous enthusiasm and accomplishment but held promise of even greater accomplishments to come.

**The Struggle for Self-Sufficiency: 1980-84**

**Definitions of the Profession: Developmental Process to Teaching**

The early years witnessed discussions about financial stability, the Achilles heel of any new organization. The Association’s demographics clearly indicated that academic advising was not at the top of institutional salary scales, so hefty annual dues were unacceptable. Travel dollars also were limited severely; thus pricey national conferences would not sell. Many hours of discussion went into strategies to achieve financial stability. The Association was living on a wing and a prayer until the board decided that conference expenses would be budgeted into anticipated conference earnings. Up to that point, speaker and other expenses had been covered by annual dues. The movement toward financial stability, given that the Association depended totally upon the personal sacrifices and volunteerism of its treasurers, was no small accomplishment and a clear tribute to the Association’s three dedicated treasurers: Frank Dyer Jr., Wes Habley, and Mike McCauley.

In early 1982 the fledgling Association had to seek permission to pay bills in installments or ask for additional time. At one point the treasury fell below $1000. Financially, San Jose (1982) was a pivotal point. The conference theme, “The Advisor as Change Agent,” was a good omen, and after San Jose, the Association’s financial health began to improve. The sustained financial wellness program the Association adopted and carefully followed eventually led to an awards and scholarships program that currently distributes approximately $25,000 a year.

Another contributor to the Association’s stability and growth, and an excellent example of the “people helping people” theme, has been the Conference Center at Kansas State University. Kansas State has handled most of the logistics for national conferences since the 1979 conference in Omaha (with the exception of Indianapolis). During the financial uncertainties, particularly in 1982, Wes Habley, Mike McCauley, and Carol Smith of the Kansas State Conference Center agreed upon a new method to finance the national conferences. The conference would not be a profit center for the Association but would cover its own expenses. Only minimal expenses for conferences would be covered by NACADA’s general fund. The NACADA-Kansas State partnership has been further strengthened by the official opening of the NACADA National Executive Office at Kansas State University during the summer of 1990. The Executive Office will assume management responsibilities for the 1991 National Conference.

With a sound strategy to achieve financial stability agreed upon, the Association turned its attention to refining the definition and expectations of its leadership positions. During her term as president, Virginia Gordon outlined NACADA job descriptions for the leadership roster. “The yellow notebook,” as it came to be called, attempted to clarify a number of ambiguities. In particular, Virginia wanted to delineate the roles of institutional and regional representatives, which up to that time had overlapped (specifically in the area of membership recruitment), and to regularize the reporting channels and expectations for standing committee chairs. During her term, the first minority affairs committee was created, with Judith Sanford appointed as chair. Election procedures were regularized, and written policies governing elections were formulated for the first time.

Shortly thereafter, with President Charles Connell’s assistance, the Association regularized its conference site selection process and continued to monitor and expeditiously address issues of equity and diversity in the leadership and in the membership. The Association also began the computerization of its membership records at this time.

The first four conferences of the 80s had not only provided an intellectual and theoretical base for practitioners but had also expanded the definition of the profession, another area that has struggled for independence.

The Asheville conference in October 1980 set a tone that had far-reaching results. In the natural beauty of the Smokey Mountains, NACADA explored the relationship between student development theory and academic advising. William Perry and Lee Knefelkamp mesmerized the audience, and many conference attendees left with a renewed mission and the belief that disciplinary research did, in fact, substantiate many of the observations and experiences academic advisors were living. One attendee described the transformation as “coming with a knapsack and self-doubt but leaving with the goal to become master of the Biltmore House.”

In Indianapolis (1981), next to the raceway, the Association picked up speed, and there was clearly a heightened self-confidence. The conference theme, “Advising: The Pivotal Point,” focused upon three
keynote areas. Paul Dressel outlined how advising students about the relationship of programs and course selection enhanced the academic enterprise. Laurine Fitzgerald challenged advisors to assume another role, that of boundary spanners (institutional interpreters, etc.), to give context and texture to advising. The third area, legal issues in academic advising, was addressed for the first time at a national conference. D. Parker Young, Cliff Travis, and Joseph Beckham discussed issues concerning the handling of student records and the legal ramifications of the advisor-advisee relationship.

San Jose called out “come west, young NACADAites,” and some heeded the call to discuss “The Advisor as Change Agent.” The attendance was light, but spirited debate followed John Crystal’s “The Advisor as Change Agent.” The attendance was light, but spirited debate followed John Crystal’s thoughts on how current societal changes could be used by individuals to chart their own futures and, by analogy, how advisors could play a major role in shaping the next generation of society’s leaders through academic advising. President Jack Lindquist from Goddard College asserted that advising was central to higher education and outlined how his college used and expected full faculty commitment to academic advising. Rosalind Loring wrapped refreshment theme asserted the relationship between academic advising and teaching. Advising was now being openly linked to the heart and soul of the academy.

Lee Knefelkamp, a second-time keynoter, returned to NACADA to describe the joy of the mutual encouragement of minds that occurs in the advising relationship. She quoted Adrienne Rich’s essay “Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying” to describe what academic advising had been to her and the difference it had made in her life:

An honorable human relationship, that is one in which two people have the right to use the word love, is a process delicate, violent, often terrifying to both persons involved. A process of redefining the truths they can tell each other. It is important to do this because in doing so we do justice to our own complexity. And it is important to do this because we can count on so few people to go the hard way with us. The possibilities that exist between two people or among a group of people are kind of an alchemy. They are the most interesting things in life. True communication means a heightened complexity. When relationships, in the classroom, interpersonally, or advising are determined by manipulation, by the need for control, they may possess a dreary kind of drama, but they cease to be interesting. They are repetitious and the shock of human possibilities has ceased to reverberate through them. But when someone tells me a piece of truth which has been withheld from me, which I needed to see my life more clearly, it may bring acute pain but it can also flood me with a cold sea-sharp wash of relief. Often such truths come by accident or from strangers or perhaps from advisors. It isn’t that to have an honorable relationship with you, I have to understand everything or tell you everything at once or that I can know beforehand every-thing I need to tell you. It means that most of the time I am eager, longing for the possibili-
to me. It means that I feel strong enough to hear your tentative and groping words and that you feel strong enough to hear my tentative and groping words and that we both know we are trying all the time to extend the possibilities of truth between us, to extend the possibilities of life between us.

Roy Heath followed Knefelkamp and affirmed the importance of relationships to the developmental process. He outlined the personality traits of the “reasonable adventurer,” a model useful in many respects. Charles Connell’s presidential address called for the Association members to respond to the challenge and to follow through on their individual campuses to make quality academic advising and quality teaching synergistic and to place advising at the center of their institutions’ activities.

The Wonder Years: 1985-86
Responding to the Call, . . . Meeting the Challenge of Diversity and New Standards

Research drives the academic enterprise and fuels teaching and service activities. The Association first met advisors’ needs by providing a support network. As Wes Habley once said, “Advisors spell relief N-A-C-A-D-A.” The opportunity to learn and share, to build professional and personal friendships, oftentimes to find others who were “the only advisor on their campus,” as Carol Ryan remarked when she first learned of NACADA, were all early benefits of NACADA membership.

Thus, in the middle years, professional identity and national visibility were still goals, but they would be reached. They would, ironically, develop in part from fear—often economic fear—that, as enrollment of traditional-age college students declined (compound by an attrition rate of 50% on many college campuses), something had to be done to stop the hemorrhaging. The “something” was already present on most campuses, but it was generally unorganized, unrecognized, unrewarded, and grossly underfunded. The something was academic advising. It was no surprise to the advisors on college campuses, and it was no surprise to the Association’s ability to respond to issues central to the success of thousands of students. Both groups published reports that prompted spin-off research. The current Task Force on Advisor Training, chaired by Faye Vowel, demonstrates further evidence of the Association’s commitment to meet needs. Consultations, and thus heightened visibility, should follow. The Association will continue its assertive posture and, in doing so, enhance its national image.

The ERIC decision to list academic advising as a descriptor in 1981 had been an important step toward national research visibility and professional identity. Carol Ryan’s patient persistence to accomplish the task is demonstrated in several years of correspondence among the Association’s leadership and ERIC representatives. The mid-80s witnessed the harvest from the 1981 decision to list academic advising as a descriptor. Professional literature on academic advising was expanding and graduate programs were offering courses and even degree emphasis in academic advising. The area continues to grow.

The Consultant Bureau added credibility to the profession and enabled Association members to share their expertise with colleagues, to lobby for enhanced commitments to academic advising, and to advance the image of the profession. The Association published a workbook for consultant training in 1984, but consultant opportunities really began to grow after the mid-80s.

NACADA’s plan for national visibility was assisted by its efforts to develop a set of guidelines for academic advising. The Association had joined the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs (CAS) in 1980, and a team of NACADA members led by Dan Wesley and then Sara Looney framed the standards and guidelines that appeared in the 1986 CAS publication. The standards and guidelines served not only as goals for program development but also as criteria for evaluation. Initial discussions raised doubts about this $100 investment, given the financial reserves at the time, but arguments that others would write the standards for advising if the Association didn’t take the lead role prevailed. National standards and guidelines have enhanced the Association’s visibility, provided some support for the profession of advising, and expanded consulting opportunities.

NACADA’s Commission on the Adult Learner, led by Cheryl Polson, and the Task Force on Oversubscribed and Selected Majors, coordinated by Virginia Gordon and Gary Kramer, are just two examples of the Association’s ability to respond to issues central to the success of thousands of students. Both groups published reports that prompted spin-off research. The current Task Force on Advisor Training, chaired by Faye Vowel, demonstrates further evidence of the Association’s commitment to meet needs. Consultations, and thus heightened visibility, should follow. The Association will continue its assertive posture and, in doing so, enhance its national image.
employers in 1986. Eric White had inaugurated the service in 1982 and led the efforts to bring it to commission status.

As membership grew during Wes Habley’s and Mike McCauley’s tenures as treasurer, the Association computerized its records, thereby allowing systematic electronic access to membership data and accurate, up-to-date financial reports. By September of 1985, the Association’s membership list had grown to approximately 700. By spring of 1990, there were over 4,000 names on the membership data base, with over 2,300 active members. The computerization of all financial records also created the opportunity to track accurately the activities of such Association cost centers as membership promotion, consulting income, and national and regional conference income and expense. As the Association opens its national executive office, it has approximately a $200,000 reserve. Growth in membership services, which has generated additional contributions to the field of academic advising. David Crockett, Vice President for Educational Services at ACT. They inaugurated in 1984 the ACT/NACADA Awards Program, through which both individual advisors and institutional advising programs could be nationally recognized for their contributions to the field of academic advising. David Crockett, Vice President for Educational Services at ACT, shepherded this partnership during the early years. ACT also provided a national organization through which NACADA could gain some visibility. Both David Crockett and Lee Noel made presentations on academic advising throughout the country. Both David Crockett and Lee Noel made presentations on academic advising throughout the United States because ACT had been studying the impact and assessment of academic advising. Since 1986 the two organizations have jointly participated in the national Summer Institute on Academic Advising hosted by ACT in Iowa City, Iowa.

The “Wonder Years” conferences not only demonstrated enormous growth and confidence, but they also confirmed the wisdom of decisions made earlier in the decade.

By the mid-80s the whispers of accountability were heard in many quarters, so it was only fitting that the 1985 Kansas City conference’s theme was “Academic Advisors: Responding to the Call for Excellence in Higher Education.” Sunny Hansen challenged the Association to expand the relationship between career development and academic advising in a gender-neutral environment. Harold (Bud) Hodgkinson laid out a demographic picture of the future for higher education that posed challenges to the traditional academy with its reliance upon a constant pool of 17- to 22-year-old middle class Caucasians. He called upon the Association to respond, both to the “new students” and to the institutional leaders who had not noticed those demographic changes. The speakers asked the Association to integrate concerns of the intellect with those of the heart and soul to forge a new consciousness. The Association was a leader in generating visibility for the services that institutions would need to provide their new constituencies.

With some trepidation, in 1986 the Association journeyed to the great northwest and the emerald city of Seattle. The trepidation was caused by fears that the Association might experience the attendance problems of San Jose four years earlier. But all went well, with a record-setting 800 advisors participating. It was an opportunity to look back and reconsider academic advising’s perspectives and performances as well as to look forward to its promises and future prospects. Nancy Schlossberg addressed the challenges associated with the potential new majority—adult learners. NACADA’s Task Force on Adult Learners, chaired by Cheryl Polson, had begun its meetings in 1985 and produced a detailed bibliography and report on the subject in 1986. John Gardner, following in the footsteps of his mentor, Thomas Jones, the first NACADA keynoter and former President of the University of South Carolina, outlined his views on advising’s role in student growth, retention, and satisfaction. He asserted that advisors were in the “dream” business and that they played an important part in helping students realize their dreams.

Beginning The Second Decade: 1987-90

Tradition and New Frontiers

In 1987, NACADA inaugurated its Scholars Award Program, another major step toward an academic identity. When the Association began, there had not been enough time to share the highs and lows of advising, let alone to consider research activities. Members were starved for companionship and hungry for recipes to handle the distribution of advising information; to deal with lack of recognition, adequate pay, and opportunities to advance; to train new advisors and peer advisors; to evaluate advising; to link advising with career development, enrollment management, and retention strategies; to better define what academic advising was really all about; to assist undecided students; and to build networks at their institutions. The bottom line was that the enormous thirst to know what
worked and how it could be adapted to one’s local environment was unquenchable. And that need still exists. NACADA continues to draw a significant number of “first-timers” as national and regional conferences move from site to site because the Association has not overlooked this basic need.

The Association’s movement toward adolescence also brought a keen awareness that the majority of academic advising on college and university campuses is done by faculty and is likely to continue to be done by faculty. The fervor of disputes between professional advisors and faculty seems to have waned at the national conferences, with both sides possibly being drawn closer together by the realities of declining or changing enrollment and the shared recognition that both have similar advising goals. Their differences may be primarily those of job expectation because most faculty devote a small portion of their time to advising and the major portion of their time to research and teaching.

The academic community’s lifeblood is research and teaching; thus, academic advising will not gain equal footing in the academic community until it can compete on similar ground. Many advisors have motivated themselves, and been assisted by their institutions, to broaden their roles beyond that of practitioners. Theoretical and experimental avenues in advising are being pursued by a growing number of advisors today, as witnessed by changes in the type and quantity of presentations at the national and regional conferences. In turn, many faculty advisors have a growing interest in research projects connected to academic advising. The division between professional advisors and faculty has faded, and the prospect for cooperative research is growing. A broader cross section of the membership now plays an active role in presenting and publishing the results of its advising programs. Again “people helping people”—by providing a nurturing and stimulating environment as well as solid information and innovative strategies for improvement—defines the NACADA spirit.

The Association’s research stipend and scholarship programs have been an additional catalyst to generate research activity as well as visibility. The journey to full academic acceptance is not complete but is well underway and holds great promise.

The National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising was established at Ohio State University and was endorsed by the NACADA Board in 1989. The Clearinghouse serves NACADA members as a repository of research on academic advising and related topics as well as examples of materials commonly used in advising (e.g., handbooks, brochures, and mission statements).

The Association is beginning to see the fruits of its labor. It has suffered some adversity, but it has become stronger. The time spent discussing issues vital to the organization’s survival (finances, representation, inclusiveness, etc.) was worthwhile, but now the Association has the confidence and the opportunity to focus its energies upon research areas such as advising’s role in retention, student development theory, advisor evaluation, outcomes assessment, and the effectiveness of proactive advising strategies. An example of this new focus is “A Position Paper on Assessment,” authored by a task force chaired by Buddy Ramos.

Maintaining its strong tradition while at the same time breaking new ground has marked the Association’s second decade.

The last four conferences have demonstrated the Association’s ever-evolving maturity and broadened roles. In 1987 in Chicago NACADA began its second decade of conferences. The conference tackled the issue of “Diversity in Academic Advising: Changing Populations/Increasing Standards.” Jacqueline Fleming challenged advisors to make a difference as she outlined how White and Black students’ performances differed during their college years. Terry O’Banion echoed Fleming’s remarks and described a process advisors could use to better work with the increasing diversity of students on the nation’s campuses (the diversity that Harold Hodgkinson had systematically defined in 1985). A panel of local top administrators shared a variety of observations about the importance of academic advising; the frustrations associated with evaluating and rewarding it, as well as increasing its visibility; and its fit into the traditional institutional triumvirate of research, teaching, and service.

In 1988 the Association visited Miami. The conference theme was “Academic Advising: Tradition Versus Innovation.” Vincent Tinto described the role of academic advising in student retention and asked advisors to become more proactive, research-oriented, and assertive in their activities. Bernice Sandler demonstrated that higher education was still not warmly welcoming women into the academy, either as students or members of the professorate, and suggested some advising strategies to increase awareness of and sensitivity to issues of equity and opportunity. The luncheon remarks of Charles Elkins (aka Jonathan Swift) were both humorous and thought-provoking as he led the audience through “A Modest Proposal: To Eliminate Academic Advising,” thereby strengthening his own academic department.
Houston was the site of the 1989 conference, which addressed “Academic Advising and Institutional Effectiveness.” Ernest Boyer shared his wealth of knowledge and research from the political and academic arenas, as well as the Carnegie Foundation, to propose a prescription for effectiveness in higher education and explained advising’s role and responsibilities in achieving excellence. Kay McClenneny outlined the criteria upon which institutional effectiveness could be judged and provided suggestions for advising’s role in the assessment-results continuum.

The Association headed west to Anaheim for its 1990 conference. It seemed only appropriate to share some of the wonderment with Disneyland. The conference theme, “Academic Advising: Continuing Visions, Renewed Commitments, New Frontiers,” was symbolized through the variety of Disneyland’s kingdoms and accompanied by the challenge to live it out on our own campuses. Blandina Cardenas-Ramirez, the first keynoter, urged advisors not to let issues of equity concerning diversity go unchallenged. She maintained, as did Harry Edwards, the Journal’s symposium speaker, that advisors often are best suited, because of information, access, and knowledge of the potential for the abuse of students, to lead challenges to the exploitation of students. Edwards’s address also listed a litany of abuses that have been heaped upon student athletes. He asked advisors to join his battle for equal treatment. Alexander Astin argued in his keynote address that “reputational and resource” approaches to defining excellence in higher education were lacking and asserted that a “talent development” approach, one that focused on the institution’s effectiveness in educating its students, would be a sounder approach. He asked advisors to support this new approach.

Observations

NACADA has addressed the issues of special population advising as well as the liberal arts advising that occupies most advisors’ time. Its presentations and publications have discussed topics such as the adult learner, students of color, oversubscribed programs, developmental advising, advising for academic recovery students, student athletes, learning-impaired students, preprofessional program advising, honors program advising, the freshman year and retention, and graduate student advising. The list could go on, but the purpose is always to improve advising and to serve the membership’s interests and needs.

In some respects the Association’s growth has followed the developmental model outlined by William Perry, one of the keynoters at Asheville in 1980. The Association initially had to pull together diverse needs and focus them into a conference theme; it did so by offering prescriptions for right and wrong advising strategies—the “it worked for me, it could do the same for you” approach or the “it didn’t work for me, it won’t for you either” approach. As the Association grew, it became more willing to accept multiplicity, both in the delivery of advising services and in the advisors delivering those services. It incorporated student development theories into its work and found that professional and faculty advisors often stood on mutual ground; this understanding allowed both groups to refine their roles and to share goals. The shared experiences are generating a growing pool of professional literature on academic advising. There is every reason to believe, given current NACADA presentations, publications, and leadership, that the Association will continue to move up the developmental ladder. If we can do it, so can our advisees!

Looking back upon those six assumptions Toni Trombley placed before the Association in Omaha in 1979, one sees over a decade dedicated to addressing each of them. The Association is entering adolescence, so there are still bumps and bruises to endure, but it has neither lost nor forgotten the wonder years, and many chapters remain in its rich future. We have promises to keep, and miles to go before we sleep.