FEATURED ARTICLE

Developmental Academic Advising: What do Students Want?

ROGER B. WINSTON, Jr, *Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services,* and

JANET A. SANDOR, *Academic Advisor, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, University of Georgia*

In recent years the role, processes, and definition of academic advising have come under close scrutiny in higher education. With college enrollments declining and college population changing, recruitment and retention have become key issues that affect the success of institutions. Crockett, Grites, and Habley have identified academic advising as a critical link in student retention.' The importance of academic advising in fostering total student growth is also recognized.

A key assumption is that academic advising should be a developmental, student-centered process.' According to Ender, Winston, and Miller, it should be goal-oriented and should require establishing a caring relationship with an advisor.' Yet, "there is no single formula for successful academic advising;"'' organizational contexts, campus resources and student sub-populations must be considered when establishing an advising program.' Given these differing conditions in institutions of higher education, and given the importance of academic advising in facilitating retention and student development, how does one assess the nature and quality of the advising process?

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[1] David S. Crockett. "Academic Advising: A Cornerstone of Student Retention." in *New Directions for Student Services: Reducing the Dropout Rate,* ed. Lee Noel (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978); Thomas J. Grites, *Academic Advising: Getting Us Through the Eighties* (Washington, D.C.: AAHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report, 1979); Wesley R. Habley, "Academic Advisement: The Critical Link in Student Retention," NASPA *Journal,* 18(4) (1982). pp. 45-50.

[2] Bums B. Crookston, "A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching," *Journal of College Student Personnel,* 13 (1972), pp. 12-17; Steven C. Ender, Roger B. Winston, Jr., and Theodore K. Miller, "Academic Advising as Student Development" in *New Directions for Student Services: Developmental Approaches to Academic Advising,* ed. Roger B. Winston, R.. Steven C. Ender, and Theodore K. Miller (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1982), pp. 3-18; Donald J. Mash, "Academic Advising: Too Often Taken for Granted," *College Board Review,* 107 (1978), pp. 32-36; F. Michael Walsh, "Revitalizing Academic Advisement," *Personnel and Guidance Journal,* 57 (1979), pp. 446-449.

[3] Fnder, Winston, and Miller, p. 8

[4] Grites, p. 41

[5] D.H. Goldenberg and K. Poindexter, "The Academic Exploration Program: A Comprehensive Administrative and Academic Advising Program for Undecided Students," in *Academic Advising: A Resource Document,* ed. David S. Crockett (Iowa City, Iowa: American College Testing, 1979).

An examination of the advising literature reveals that all is not well in the traditional advising programs. Most studies of advising are surveys of advisee-advisor satisfaction with, or perceptions of specific advising programs. Several studies found advisee satisfaction to be related to the social, interpersonal relationship between the advisor and the advisee.[1] Bostaph concluded that the type of advising system has little effect on student perceptions of advising. Addressing expectations of advising, Larsen and Brown found that students and faculty in general agree on the responsibilities of each in advising, but that a formal statement identifying the specific expectations of advisees and advisors is needed.[2]

Relationships and the mutual understanding of the advising relationship seem to be key issues in these studies. Yet, it is difficult to compare these findings across student populations, advising programs, and basic assumptions of advising. Questionnaires on advisee satisfaction, perceptions, opinions, and evaluations are plentiful; however, a need exists for a systematic, theoretically-grounded instrument that measures developmental advising. Although many have argued for developmental advising, no one has operationally defined it, and even more important, no one has asked students what kind of attention and relationships they want. Through the development and administration of the Academic Advising Inventory in this study, students were given the opportunity to demonstrate a preference for either developmental advising or for traditional prescriptive advising.

METHOD

Procedure

The Academic Advising Inventory was distributed in a variety of undergraduate class settings at the University of Georgia. Participation was voluntary and students' identities remained anonymous. A total of 306 usable responses were obtained. The participants represented ten Schools and Colleges in the University and seventeen major areas of study. Table I provides the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Instrument Development

Model of Developmental Advising. Crookston's "Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching" is a description of the student-advisor relationship in terms of two contrasting behavioral styles, prescriptive relationship and developmental relationship. A prescriptive relationship is one based on authority; it results when the advisor diagnoses the student's problems or concerns and prescribes a remedy or gives advice. The developmental relationship results when "the advisor and the student differentially engage in a series of developmental tasks, the successful completion of which results in varying

[1] Alexander W. Astin, Four Critical Years: *Effects of* College on Beliefs, *Attitudes,* and Knowledge (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977); Phyllis A. Hornbuckle, John Mahoney, and John Borgard, "A Structural Analysis of Student Perceptions of Faculty Advising." Journal of College *Student* Personnel, 20 (1979), pp. 296-300.

[2] Charles P. Bostaph, "A Study of Student Attitudes Towards Three Different Academic Advising Systems Currently Used in Three Different Undergraduate Schools at the University of Pittsburgh," Diss. University of Pittsburgh 1976; Max D. Larsen and Bonnie Brown, "Student and Faculty Expectations of Academic Advising," NACADA Journal, 3 (1983), pp. 31-37.

Table I

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE

	n	Per Cent
Sex		
Male	122	39.9
Female	172	56.2
Missing data	12	3.9
Race		
Black	27	8.8
White	231	75.5
Other	13	4.2
Declined to respond or missing data	35	11.4
Age		
18 or younger	45	14.7
19	78	25.5
20	64	20.9
21	56	18.3
22	27	8.8
23	7	2.2
24 and older	19	6.2
Missing data	10	3.3
Marital Status		
Unmarried	271	88.6
Married	19	6.2
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	6	2.0
Missing data	10	3.3
Class Standing		
Freshman	65	21.2
Sophomore	89	29.1
Junior	76	24.8
Senior	63	20.6
Missing data	13	4.2
Enrollment Status		
Fulltime	267	87.3
Parttime	21	6.9
Missing data	19	6.2
Type of Advising Received		
Assigned advisor in advising center	164	53.6
Any advisor available in advising center	26	8.5
Faculty advisor, not related to an advising center	57	18.6
Group advising	22	7.2
Other advising	25	8.2
Missing data	12	3.9
Amount of time generally spent in an advising session		
Less than 15 minutes	117	38.2
15 to 30 minutes	140	45.8
31 to 45 minutes	21	6.9
More than 45 minutes	14	4.6
Missing data	14	4.6

degrees of learning **by both** parties.''' An agreement is reached on who takes initiative and who takes responsibility for decisions. Figure I displays the characteristics of the relationships.

Figure 1

CONTRASTING RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATIONS IN ACADEMIC ADVISING +

Prescriptive	Developmental
Focuses on limitations	Focuses on potentialities
Problem oriented	Growth oriented
Based on authority and giving of advice	Based on equal and shared problem-solving
Advisor has primary responsibility	Advisor and student share responsibility
Student is seen as lazy	Student is seen as wanting to learn
Student requires close supervision	Student is capable of self-direction
Evaluaton is done by advisor	Evaluation is shared process
Advisor takes initiative	Either student or advisor takes initiative
Relationship is based on status	Relationship is based on trust and respect

+These descriptions are adapted from Burns B. Crookston, "A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching," *Journal of College Student Personnel,* **13** (1972), 12-17.

Validity and Reliability. Construct validity was addressed in the development of the inventory. Sixty-two items were written, in pairs, to represent both developmental and prescriptive relationships for each content area. Eight experts in the field of academic advising were asked to participate in the next stage of construction by independently classifying items written by the authors? These experts were provided with all items (unpaired) and with definitions of developmental and prescriptive advising. They were asked to complete three tasks: I. Identify items as being developmental or prescriptive; 2. Identify inappropriate items; and 3. Identify and include advising activities that had been overlooked. The final instrument was composed of 22 pairs of randomly ordered items. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was determined to be .81, which adds further support to the experts' classification of items.

Crookston, p. I3

RESULTS

In **Table II** brief descriptions (not actual items) of each of the **22** prescriptive-developmental continua, with means and standard deviations, are presented. The means for **21** of the **22** descriptions are higher than 4.0, indicating a preference for the developmental end of the continuum. In Figure II the percent of students who chose the prescriptive **and developmental** descriptions are presented graphically. Only two descriptions (numbered 1 and 2 in Table II) of prescriptive advising attracted more than one-half of the students.

Two-way factorial analysis of variance of total scores, with main effects of gender and class standing, revealed no statistically significant difference on either variable and no significant interaction.

Table II
PRESCRIPTIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL ADVISING CONTINUA:
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Prescriptive	Developmental	Mean'	s.d.
1. Advisor tells student what he/she needs to know about programs and courses.	Advisor helps student learn about courses and programs for self.	4.71	2.63
2. Advisor knows college policies and tells student what to do.	Advisor tells student where to learn about policies and helps in understanding how they apply to him/her.	3.45	2.55
3. Advisor tells student what schedule is best.	Advisor teaches about schedule planning and student takes responsibility for planning own schedule.	5.84	2.39
4. Advisor registers student for classes.	Advisor teaches student how to register self.	6.53	1.63
5. Advisor informs about deadlines and follows up behind student.	Advisor informs about deadlines, then lets student follow up.	5.55	2.50
6. Advisor tells student which classes to take.	Advisor presents class options; student makes own selections.	7.17	1.53
7. Advisor takes responsibility for keeping advising file updated.	Advisor and student share responsibility for file.	5.66	2.49
8. Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through files and records.	Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through records and talking to student about academic experiences.	6.58	1.93
9. Advisor tells student what to do in order to get advised.	Advisor and student reach agreement about nature of advising relationship.	5.53	2.08
10. Advisor uses grades and test results to determine courses most appropriate for student.	Advisor and student use grades, test results, and self-determined interests and abilities to determine most appropriate courses.	6.22	1.95

11. Advisor specifies alternatives and indicates best choice when student faces difficult decision.	Advisor assists student in identifying alternatives and weighing consequences when facing difficult decision.	6.31	2.19
12. Advisor takes care of academic problems.	Advisor teaches student problem-solving techniques.	6.54	1.72
13. Advisor does not deal with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.	Advisor deals with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.	6.16	2.07
14. Advisor suggests what student should major in.	Advisor suggests steps student can take to help decide on major.	6.86	1.56
15. Advisor identifies realistic academic goals based on grades and test results.	Advisor assists student in identifying realistic academic goals based on grades, test results, and self-understanding.	6.77	1.69
16. Advisor is not knowledgeable about help available with non-academic concerns.	Advisor is knowledgeable about available help for non-academic concerns.	6.39	1.96
17. Advisor does not encourage discussion of personal problems.	Advisor encourages discussion of personal problems.	5.19	1.85
18. Advisor is concerned mainly about academic life of student.	Advisor is concerned about personal, social, and academic life of student.	4.34	2.46
19. Advisor unaware of student's outside-the-classroom life.	Advisor shows interests in student's out-of-class life.	5.18	2.10
20. Advisor provides information mainly about courses and class schedules.	Advisor provides information about workshops and seminars in areas such as career planning and study skills, and courses and class schedules.	5.72	2.35
21. Advisor discusses only academic interests and plans.	Advisor discusses academic and other-than-academic interests and plans.	5.88	1.90
22. Advisor does not spend time discussing time management and study techniques.	Advisor spends time discussing time management and effective study techniques.	**5.35**	**2.07**

* Student selected either prescriptive or developmental description of ideal academic advising, and then indicated how important that aspect was, using 1 =very important to 4 =slightly important for prescriptive advising or 8 =very important to 5 =slightly important for developmental advising.

FIGURE 2

**Percent of Students Selecting Developmental
and Prescriptive Advising**

DESCRIPTIVE OF ADVISING
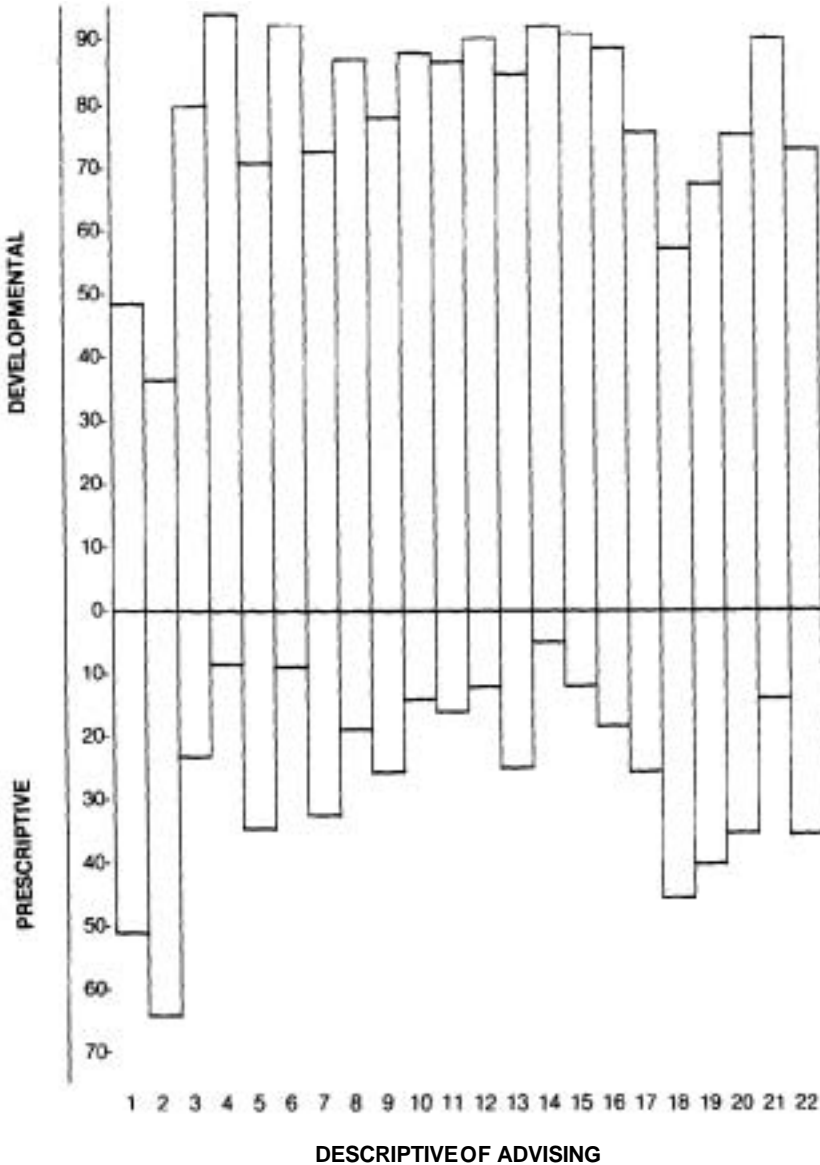
DISCUSSION

According to Crookston, students believed that the teaching function of the advisor was most important.[10] Students rated as important (mean of 6.0 or higher): (a) teaching: (b) how to register sebf, (c) problem-solving approaches, (d) processes for deciding on an academic major, and (e) goal-setting strategies. Students also rated as important that advisors:

- assist with class selection, but allow students to make decisions;
- form a relationship of sufficient closeness that the student is known beyond his/her file, test scores, and grades;
- relate the advising process to selection of academic majors and future careers; and
- be knowledgeable about all aspects of the institution, especially sources of help and activities offered through the Student Affairs Division.

Woven throughout is the underlying theme that students wish to be considered partners in the advising process, not the recipients of advice.

In this study it was found that in the area of academic policy and program requirements students wanted advisors to take responsibility for staying well-informed and for telling students what they must do to satisfy requirements. Whether advisors should assume total responsibility for keeping students informed is subject to question. It is probably a subject that should be discussed during the time the nature of the advising relationship is discussed, and the advisor and student should clarify their individual roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

While students want advisors to be concerned about them as individuals and to spend time to get to know them beyond test scores, grades and transcripts, they do not want to go back to the days of *in* loco *parentis.* The majority of students want interest and support from advisors regarding academic matters and out-of-class activities, but do not want their freedom curtailed. Advisors are seen primarily as persons who teach and support students, but allow them maximum freedom of behavior and decision-making.

Developmental advising seems to be preferred by most students (men and women) from first enrollment through graduation. This finding questions the practice at many colleges where attention is paid to students during their first year, but in the second year, they are assumed to no longer need attention.

These findings confirm that students are seeking an advising relationship that can be characterized as "developmental." Borgard has raised the question whether colleges "should" seek to implement a developmental concept of advising. Based on this study, one may conclude from the students' perspective that the answer to the question is a resounding *"yes."* If the arguments made by Crookston, Ender, Winston, and Miller, Grites, Mash, and others can show that developmental advising is an appropriate activity for colleges;[11] and if this study can show that students want developmental advising; then, institutions would have a mandate to find resources, and design administrative structures to implement it. However, change in approaches used on many campuses seems essential.

[10] Crookston, p. 13.

[11] Crookston, p. 13; Ender, Winston, and Miller, pp. 4-5; Grites, p. 10; Mash, p. 33.

In this study 84% of the students indicated that they spend 30 minutes or less (with 38% spending less than 15 minutes) per advising session. More than one-half hour per advising session is needed to establish a relationship and cover the breadth of topics desired by students.

In conclusion, this study marks the beginning of a closer examination of the academic advising relationship. Several writers have argued that academic advising should be based on a developmental process characterized by a trusting and caring relationship. This research establishes for the first time, students' preference for "developmental advising." Though there is limited validity data for the instrumentation at present, one can tentatively conclude that developmental academic advising, as defined herein, is clearly preferred by both men and women students, and all classes — freshmen through seniors.

Unlike previous surveys of advising satisfaction, this study has attempted to operationally define academic advising independent of a particular campus or delivery system, and to create a theoretical framework that makes possible comparisons across student populations, differing academic programs, and educational institutions. There is no single formula for a successful advising program, but there is a single type of advising relationship preferred by students. Further research, using a similar framework for defining advising must be done with "special student populations", and different types of educational institutions, to verify that developmental advising is preferred by most college students. **A** next step is to begin to evaluate academic advising practices to determine which practices support developmental academic advising and which do not. More research is also needed to define better the concepts of developmental advising and to investigate the essential characteristics or qualities of the advisor-student relationship.