Academic Advising
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Academic Advising

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INTRODUCTION

In 1993 a committee of advisors and administrators, led by Debbie Blackstone created the first UAB Academic Advising Manual. This document was endorsed by the President of the University and approved as the institutional guide for advising throughout the university. The core of the original document is the foundation of this third edition. The Training Committee of the Committee on Academic Advising (CAA) was given the responsibility of maintaining the manual. In the most recent update policy and procedural information which changes frequently has been eliminated from the manual. The timeless information from the original document which provides all of us in the institution an understanding of the principles, processes and standards of academic advising has been retained.

The committee would like to recognize the contribution of Debbie Blackstone and the original committee. The concept, information, and language of this edition are that of the original version. The original manual received national recognition from the National Academic Advising Association as an Outstanding Advising Publication in 1993. This award recognized the manual as an outstanding advising resource. It was one of the first awards which affirmed what has become a long standing tradition of excellence in advising at UAB.

The manual in its current form provides us with the basic tools that are needed to support the mechanism of advising in this university. This mechanism unites the expertise of advisors with the students’ need to explore and fully develop their individual capabilities in this unique environment. This guide underscores the responsibilities advisors have and the contributions they make to the welfare of the students they serve. The manual serves as a guide for each advisor to evaluate individual style – where it is effective as well as where it could be improved. The Committee on Academic Advising is committed to maintaining the highest standards of the profession and providing its support to the membership. We hope this resource will serve as a vital tool for the continued growth and development of each advisor.

Nancy Walburn,
Chairman, Committee on Academic Advising
November, 2005
About Advising

This section contains basic information about the definition, goals and philosophy of academic advising. The ideas presented here provide the foundation for academic advising and serve as the standards by which to evaluate your own advising.
Advising Defined

Academic advising is defined as “a decision-making process during which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor.” (Grites, p. 1)

This definition has several implications:

- Because it is a **process**, academic advising is ongoing and multifaceted (Grites, p. 8). Academic advising is more than a one-shot conference with a student; rather, it is a continuous process of student and advisor interaction (Bucks Co).

- Because it is an **exchange**, academic advising is the responsibility of both student and advisor. The advisor's part of this exchange is to facilitate communication, to coordinate learning experiences through course selection, career planning and academic progress review and to refer students to other campus resources (Grites, p. 8-9).

- Because the process is **student-centered**, academic advising helps students to understand themselves better (ACT, p. 1.3).

- Because it deals with the **maximizing of potential**, academic advising helps students define realistic life, educational, career and personal goals and develop plans to realize those goals (MATC, p. 3; Nashville from Winston, p. 19; ACT, p. 1.5).

- Because it involves **decision-making**, academic advising assists students in receiving information, considering available options and making choices (Weber St).

The underlying assumption of this definition is that academic advising is **developmental** in nature. Academic advising helps students identify their life goals, acquire those skills necessary for growth and ultimately succeed in a manner unique to each student (Ohio St, p. 20). Developmental academic advising is reflective of the university's mission of total student development (Nashville, from Winston, p. 19).

“The primary purpose of an academic advising program is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans which are compatible with their life goals” (CAS Standards).
ABOUT ADVISING

Goals of Academic Advising

GOAL 1: To help students better understand themselves
Academic advising should help students both understand and accept themselves. With the help of an academic advisor, students should come to a better understanding of their values, goals, abilities, interests and limitations. One goal of academic advising, then, is student self-knowledge (Midstate, p. 5.228, 5.331; ACT, p. 1.3; Weber St).

GOAL 2: Clarification of life and career goals (CAS Standards)
Academic advising should help students define and develop realistic goals. Advisors, therefore, should teach students the process of goal-setting and realization. To do this requires advisors to help students relate their interests, skills, abilities and values to careers and occupations. Incorporated into this mix should be an understanding of the nature, purpose and relevance of higher education and its link to the world of work. Advisors, then, assist students in clarifying both short term and long term educational and career goals (Midstate, p. 5.228, 5.331; Bucks Co; Houston Baptist, p. 25; ACT p. 1.3, 5.11; Bunker Hill; Utah St; MATC; Plymouth St; Nashville; Louisville).

GOAL 3: Development of suitable educational plans (CAS Standards)
Academic advising should help students select and review their academic program. Each student’s educational plan should be consistent with individual life and career goals as well as the student’s unique interests and abilities. It is important when choosing their academic program that students be provided with an organized process for exploring their educational options. When necessary, advisors should be prepared to help students explore alternative courses of action including the identification of academic alternatives and the consideration of alternative careers in line with the student’s abilities and interests (Midstate, p. 5.331; ACT, p. 1.3; Louisville; Bunker Hill, p. 19; Plymouth St; Nashville; Louisville).

GOAL 4: Selection of appropriate courses and other educational experiences (CAS Standards)
Academic advising should help students develop a course of study which enables them to achieve their goals. Advisors should assist students in choosing courses appropriate to the student’s program requirements, ability level and individual needs. Proper course selection should help a student reach their educational objectives as efficiently as possible while maintaining the correct scheduling sequence. The choice of electives should also reflect the student’s academic background, goals and interests (Weber St; Bunker Hill, p. 10; Nashville; Utah St; ACT, p. 5.11).
GOAL 5: Interpretation of institutional requirements (CAS Standards)
Academic advising should not only provide students with accurate information about the university's policies, procedures and requirements but also make sure that students understand these. It is important that advisors clearly communicate to students correct information about degree programs, degree requirements and course offerings (Midstate, p. 5.331; ACT, p. 1.3; Louisville; Bunker Hill, p. 10; Plymouth St; Utah St).

GOAL 6: Increasing student awareness of educational resources available (CAS Standard)
Academic advising should assist students in becoming aware of and learning to utilize the academic resources on campus which can help them achieve their goals. Advisors should help students identify and locate on-campus resources, which can provide academic assistance (Nashville; Bunker Hill, p. 10; Weber St).

GOAL 7: Evaluation of student progress toward established goals (CAS Standard)
Academic advising should assist students in constant evaluation and reevaluation of progress towards goals and educational plans. Advisors, therefore, should continually help students monitor and evaluate their academic progress and help students assess their own performance. If academic difficulty occurs, advisors should be prepared to assist students in analyzing the causes of such difficulty and in finding ways to improve their performance (Midstate, p. 5.331; Bunker Hill; Louisville; Houston Baptist; Bucks Co; ACT, p. 1.3; MATC). "Academic advising should be viewed as a continuous process of clarification and evaluation" (CAS Standards).

GOAL 8: Development of decision-making skills (CAS Standards)
Academic advising should develop the student's ability to make good decisions in the student's own best interest. Academic advisors assist students in developing decision-making skills by questioning and encouraging student decisions. Students should be encouraged to gather and evaluate information, consider their values and goals, and make decisions with a clear understanding of alternatives, limitations and possible consequences of decisions. Students should be encouraged to accept and recognize their responsibility for academic choices (Midstate, p. 5.331; Plymouth St; ACT, p. 1.6 from Hamline; Utah St). "The ultimate responsibility for making decisions about life goals and educational plans rests with the individual student. The academic advisor assists by helping to identify and assess alternatives and the consequences of decisions" (CAS Standards).


**GOAL 9: Reinforcement of student self-direction (CAS Standards)**

Academic advising should assist students in growth. Students should grow in self awareness of the relationship of education to life; students should grow in their ability to set goals and establish plans to achieve those goals; and students should grow in their awareness of life extending past their college years. Academic advisors should focus on students' active awareness of and participation in their own development. Academic advisors should provide caring support to students through the growth process (Midstate, p. 5.226, Nashville).

**GOAL 10: Referral to and use of other institutional and community support services, where appropriate (CAS Standards)**

Academic advising should integrate the many resources of the university to meet each student's particular educational needs and goals. To make sure that students are familiar with and make effective use of campus resources, academic advisors should identify special needs and match students to available resources. Appropriate referrals by advisors help ensure that students' needs are met in a timely manner (Midstate, p. 5.331; Plymouth St; Bunker Hill, p. 10; Louisville; Houston Baptist, p. 25; ACT, p. 1.3; Utah St).

**GOAL 11: Collecting and distributing student data regarding student needs, preferences, and performance for use in institutional policymaking (CAS Standards)**

Academic advisors should provide information about students to the university, schools, and academic departments to assist in campus decision-making (Midstate, p. 5.331; Bunker Hill).
Developmental Advising

Seven conditions are essential to developmental advising:

1. Academic advising is a **continuous process** with an accumulation of personal contacts between advisor and student. These contacts have both **direction and purpose**.

2. Advising must concern itself with **quality-of-life issues**, and the advisor has a responsibility to attend to the quality of the student's experience in college.

3. Advising is **goal related**. The goals should be established and owned by the student and should encompass academic, career and personal development areas.

4. Advising requires the establishment of a **caring human relationship** – one in which the advisor must take primary responsibility for its initial development.

5. Advisors should be **models for students** to emulate, specifically demonstrating behaviors that lead to self-responsibility and self-directiveness.

6. Advisors should seek to **integrate services and expertise** of both academic and student affairs professionals.

7. Advisors should seek to **utilize** as many campus and community **resources** as possible.

(Ohio St, p. 20, from Ender, Winston & Miller 1982)
O’Banion’s Model

In 1972, O’Banion devised the first model of academic advising. This model is a sequence of logical, integrated events that include:

- Exploration of life goals
- Exploration of career goals
- Selection of educational program
- Selection of courses
- Scheduling of courses

(Budes Co., p. 7; Grites, p. 9)

To be effective in helping students succeed in each of these, advisors need the following skills, knowledge and attitudes:

1. **Exploration of life goals**

   - knowledge of student characteristics and development
   - understanding of decision-making process
   - knowledge of psychology and sociology
   - skills in counseling techniques
   - appreciation of individual differences
   - belief in worth and dignity of all individuals
   - belief that all have potential

2. **Exploration of career goals**

   - all under #1
   - knowledge of vocational fields
   - skill in interpretation of tests
   - understanding of changing nature of work in society
   - acceptance of all fields of work as worthy and dignified
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3. Selection of educational program

♦ knowledge of programs available at UAB
♦ knowledge of requirements of programs (special entrance requirements, time commitments, etc.)
♦ knowledge of UAB requirements for transfers
♦ knowledge of how others have performed in program
♦ knowledge of follow-up success of those who have completed program

4. Selection of courses

♦ knowledge of courses available
♦ knowledge of any special information regarding courses (prerequisites, time offerings, transferability, applicability to graduation requirements, sequencing)
♦ rules and regulations regarding academic warning and suspension, limitations on course load
♦ knowledge of honors courses or developmental courses
♦ knowledge of instructors and their teaching styles
♦ knowledge of student's ability through test scores, high school record, GPA, academic progress to date
♦ knowledge of course content

5. Scheduling of courses

♦ knowledge of class schedule
♦ knowledge of processes of registration and changing schedule
♦ knowledge of work and commuting requirements

(Ohio St, from Terry O'Banion, "An Academic Advising Model," AAJC Journal, March 1972)
The Importance of Advising

As an advisor, you are important to students because...

- You are a principal contact between new students and the university (Ohio St).
- You personalize the university for your students. In a real sense you, as advisor, are an embodiment of the institution, linking UAB to its students (ACT, p. 1.6, from Hamline).
- You provide students a lifeline to the administration (Weber St).
- You are a role model (Weber St, Ohio St).
- You are a coordinator of your students' educational experience (ACT, p. 1.3).

Your effective advising benefits your students.

Effective advising helps students

- attain their educational and career objectives
- achieve GPA's consistent with their ability
- develop a meaningful relationship with you (ACT, p.1.3-1.4).

Your effective advising benefits UAB.

Effective advising results in

- students having a satisfying educational process and developing a positive attitude towards UAB (ACT brochure).
- higher retention rates by providing a bond to UAB (ACT, p. 1.4; Grites, p. 2).
- students having a personal acquaintance with faculty and staff that can develop into a lifelong association with UAB (ACT, p. 5.11).
This handbook is modeled on five characteristics of communication - speaker, audience, message, feedback, and context. In an advising situation there is no single speaker or audience since those involved in an advising conference both send and receive messages. With this in mind, the next two sections deal with the participants in the advising interaction.

In conjunction with the standards of advising from the previous section, Section II addresses the characteristics, limitations and roles of an advisor within the process of academic advising. The checklist at the end of this section incorporates some of the characteristics and actions of an ideal advisor.
Characteristics of Good Advisors

Effective academic advisors...

... are ACCESSIBLE

... provide ACCURATE INFORMATION

... have a CARING RELATIONSHIP with students.

Being ACCESSIBLE means...

1. Making time in your schedule for students. One of the biggest complaints students have about advising is a lack of availability of their advisor. Having generous office hours and a maximum amount of time available to your students is important to them (ACT, p. 5.13).

2. Making enough time for each student. Enough time means setting the length of your appointments to adequately meet the needs of your students. Explanations of policies and procedures should be thorough, and this takes more than a couple of minutes. It is important to take enough time to properly evaluate a student's problem (Houston Baptist, p. 29, from Metz and Allen, 1981; Plymouth St; ACT, p. 5.5, from Maryland).

3. Encouraging students to use that time regularly. Students should be encouraged to see you frequently (Plymouth St).

4. Encouraging students to come in early. Everyone has students who wait until the last minute to do everything from withdraw from a course to apply for graduation. Encourage your students to review their progress with you early in the term and early in their degree programs to detect difficulties (Utah St).

5. Encouraging students to use that time for numerous reasons. Effective advising is both long-range planning as well as immediate problem-solving. For this reason it is particularly effective to see each student individually once a term outside of registration periods. Conferences should be scheduled more often as necessary (Houston Baptist, p. 29, from Metz & Allen, 1981; ACT, p. 5.340, from Millikin).

6. Leaving enough time for questions. Students should be provided the opportunity to ask you questions at every conference (Houston Baptist, p. 31, from Aiken, et al, 1976).

7. Posting office hours. Accessibility means not only being available to students, but letting them know when and where they can find you every term (Houston Baptist, p. 95, from Fogarty).

8. Inviting students to use that time. Invitations to students to come in and see you, whether through post cards, newsletters, or a regular correspondence system, are effective in getting students in for advising (Houston Baptist, p. 95, from Fogarty).
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Providing ACCURATE INFORMATION means...

1. Knowing about academic requirements. Having a knowledge of university requirements also means being thoroughly familiar with the academic requirements and policies of our department and school (ACT, p. 5.12; ACT, 5.5. from Maryland).

2. Understanding the reasons for academic requirements. In addition to knowing what the academic requirements are, you should be able to interpret and explain the rationale for those requirements (MATC; ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks College).

3. Knowing how to alter academic programs. In exception cases, students may need to modify or alter a program of study to make it more meaningful to them. You should understand how your area uses petitions, requests for waivers, placement tests and non-traditional credit (ACT, p. 5.12).

4. Knowing about UAB’s academic resources. You need to be familiar with on-campus resources, including the library and help labs in order to help students maximize the university’s opportunities (Ohio St; Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

5. Knowing where to refer students. You should know where to refer students whom you cannot help, providing a specific name and location when you refer. All sorts of resources for information and assistance are out there to help if you can connect students to them. In addition, you may wish to contact resource persons directly for information and advice about a particular situation (Plymouth St; Houston Baptist, p. 95, from Fogarty, 1981; Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976; Houston Baptist, p. 29, from Metz and Allen, 1981).

6. Knowing about Student Affairs resources. Be able to tell students about the opportunities available to facilitate in-class and extracurricular learning. Be familiar with resources such as concerts, lecture series, the Center for Counseling and Wellness and Intramural sports (Houston Baptist, p. 95, from Fogarty, 1981; Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

7. Checking when you don’t know. When in doubt, call appropriate office or department for an answer. It is not possible for you to know all the academic policies, procedures and nuances of every degree all the time. It is much easier to check about something than to tell a student they aren’t graduating (Plymouth St; Stockton). The wisdom to say, “I don’t know” should be followed with the willingness to say “But I’ll find out” (ACT, p. 5.5, from Maryland).

8. Seeing the big picture. You should remember that each piece of information you receive about or from a student be interpreted in light of everything else you know (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks).
9. **Providing the big picture.** Give your students an integrated picture of UAB’s courses, procedures, requirements and goals (Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

10. Knowing about **specific courses.** As much as possible, be familiar with course content, instructors, size and type of testing (ACT, p. 5.4, from Michigan).

11. Knowing about **opportunities relevant to the student.** Help students become aware of opportunities such as scholarships, new courses and interdisciplinary majors (ACT, p. 5.4, from Michigan).

**Having a personal and CAREING RELATIONSHIP with students means...**

1. **Being sympathetic and empathetic.** You should listen with understanding to a student's problems, including academic problems and problems relating to the college transition process. A student's problem represents your opportunity to demonstrate personal warmth, respect and genuineness (ACT, p. 5.11; Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

2. **Listening to problems.** You should be willing to work with a student on academic problems, recognizing that these may be connected to other problems the student may have. Listening constructively means attempting to hear all aspects of your student's problem (ACT, p. 5.13; Houston Baptist, p.29, from Metz & Allen, 1981).

3. **Helping with problems.** You should help students resolve academic difficulties and teach them the skills necessary to improve their performance. This requires that you understand academic survival skills and study skills (Houston Baptist, p. 95 from Fogarty, 1981; Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

4. **Questioning student choices.** Don't just accept or endorse student decisions – ask students about their choice of courses, major and career in light of their goals, abilities and interests. Rubber stamp approval, even though choices meet prescribed requirements, does nothing to further a student's understanding of a decision and does not expose them to available, perhaps preferable, alternatives. Exploring objectives, interests and motivations leads to more thorough advising (Stockton; Houston Baptist, p. 32, from Morehead St, 1981; ACT, p. 5.40, from Michigan).

5. **Personalizing the university.** As a representative of the university, you do this whenever you assist students. Academic advisors offer a relationship to students that contribute to a personalized educational experience from orientation to graduation (Ohio St; Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).
6. **Knowing each student.** You should know your students well enough to be aware of individual academic and educational needs and have some ideas about how these needs can best be met. It is important to know each student as an individual and to provide each with personal attention (Utah St; ACT, p. 5.5, from Maryland).

7. Making students **aware that you want to help.** To do this, communicate your desire to help each student (Plymouth St).

8. **Helping students adjust.** The transition to college is often difficult, whether or not a student is coming straight from high school or resuming their education after some time away from school. Demonstrate to new students an understanding of this transition (MATC; Houston Baptist, p. 95, from Fogarty, 1981; Houston Baptist, p. 30 from Aiken, 1976).

9. **Understanding students.** Be aware of theories and principles of student and career development (Ohio St).

10. Being **friendly and developing rapport.** Establish friendly relationships by making sure your students know you are interested in them as people (Houston Baptist, p. 95 from Fogarty, 1981; Houston Baptist, p. 32, from Morehead, 1981; ACT, p. 5.7, from Kansas St).

11. **Helping students be their best.** Encourage your students to maximize their potential (Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

12. **Self-disclosing.** Tell students about yourself as a person who is continually going through the process of becoming educated (Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976).

13. Being **realistic.** Provide assistance to students by realistically helping them to assess their choice of major, careers and educational goals. False reassurance minimizes problems and sets students up for failure (Houston Baptist, p. 30, from Aiken, 1976; ACT, p. 5.167, from Ricks College).

14. Considering the **student's perspective.** You should try to understand student concerns from a student point of view. Whenever a problem occurs, look at it from your advisee’s point of view rather than from your own (Houston Baptist, p. 29, from Metz & Allen, 1981; ACT, p. 5.167, from Ricks College).

15. **Accepting individual differences.** Just as every advisor on campus is different, so, too, is every student. Try to approach each student as unique in their needs, abilities, interests and goals (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks College).

16. Acting as a **liaison.** Be willing to be the connecting point between students, staff, faculty and administration (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks College).
17. Being genuine. Be yourself and act naturally. Most people (including students) can tell if you're playing a role or pretending to be interested (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks College).

18. Checking your reaction. Exercise restraint when surprised, angry or resentful about something that a student says, whether the statement is about you, an academic problem or a personal problem (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks College).

19. Respecting confidential information. What students tell you in confidence should be kept to yourself. Although it is sometimes tempting, take care not to gossip about students (ACT, p. 5.167, from Ricks College).

20. Accepting student change. You should be prepared to help students who revise or change their academic or career plans. If you are unfamiliar with the area of the student's new direction, refer them to an appropriate advisor who can help (MATC, p. 24).

21. Encouraging exploration. Help students view all the opportunities available at UAB (ACT, p. 5.41, from Michigan).

Limitations on Advising Responsibilities

While a lot is expected from an academic advisor, there are limits to your advising responsibility. Keep the following boundaries in mind when working with students.

1. You **can't make decisions for your students**, but you can be a sympathetic listener and you can offer alternatives for the student to consider. Presenting information and asking questions is helpful, but it is not helpful to give too many answers. Encouraging student growth means letting students make their own decisions and letting them accept the consequences of those decisions. Students sometimes want answers from you not only for expediency but also to avoid taking responsibility. Telling students what to do puts the potential blame on you (ACT, p. 5.9, from Millikin; Houston Baptist, p. 33, from Morehead, 1981; ACT, p. 1.5, from Hamline). "The ultimate responsibility for making decisions about life goals and educational plans rests with the individual student. The academic advisor assists by helping to identify and assess alternatives and the consequences of decisions" (CAS Standards).

2. You **can't increase the native ability of your students**, but you can encourage the maximum use of that ability (ACT, p. 5.9, from Millikin; Houston Baptist, p. 33, from Morehead, 1981).

3. You **can't reduce the academic or employment load of a student**, but you can make any recommendations you feel necessary to the appropriate offices for schedule or financial adjustments (ACT, p. 5.9 from Millikin; Houston Baptist, p. 33, from Morehead, 1981).

4. You **aren't expected to handle emotional problems** which fall outside the range of normal student behavior. Complex financial, emotional, physical or personal problems should be referred to appropriate departments. Academic advisors are not psychological counselors. If you become aware of serious problems, the best thing for the student is to refer them to someone who has training in the required area (ACT, p. 5.9, from Millikin; Houston Baptist, p. 33, from Morehead, 1981; Ohio St).

5. You are expected to **guide, not compel students**. Academic advisors are not dictators. In that sense, the academic plan developed for students should be a collaborative effort between you and the student concerned. It is, after all, the student's education, needs, desires and motivations and you best assist them as a guide (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks; ACT, p. 1.6, from Hamline; ACT, p. 5.12).

6. **Recognize your own limitations in helping your students - you can't do everything** (ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks).
Tips and Tools for Student Conference

Before Seeing Students:

- Keep and post regularly scheduled office hours.
- Increase your office hours during peak registration periods.
- Understand how to use the computer resources (STARS, E-Mail, Advisor website).
- Try to notify students by mail of registration advising and your expectations of them in preparation for schedule planning.
- Know other advisors and their areas of responsibility.
- Review current policies and study new policy or procedural changes.
- Be familiar with course content and instructors.
- Understand all university procedures (i.e. adding courses, withdrawals after midterm) including appeal and grievance procedures.

Before Seeing a Particular Student:

- Review the student's file. Make sure all information is current and includes up-to-date records. Know the student's academic background including high school courses and grades, ACT scores, transfer courses and grades, and present academic status.
- Using a curriculum checksheet, prepare an evaluation of the courses the student has taken as they apply to the particular degree the student is seeking. Allocate transfer credit appropriately. Evaluations prepared in advance assure students that core curriculum, major and minor requirements are being fulfilled.
- Check grade point averages where appropriate. Calculate grade point deficiency if needed.
- Look at results of placement tests and be ready to explain these to students. Tell students if any placement tests need to be taken.
- Look at possible strategies to improve a student's GPA (i.e. repeating courses) and be prepared to bring these to the student's attention.
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During a Conference:

- Have information readily available (i.e. catalogs, evaluations).

- Have the student complete in your office any necessary forms to facilitate change (i.e. change of major, change of address, repeat course forms).

After a Conference:

- Write up conference notes. Keeping adequate records of your conference avoids unnecessary duplication of effort. Update the student's advising folder regularly with grade reports. Date all actions taken and all write-ups of discussions with the student. Conference notes may indicate failure to show for appointments, explanations of academic difficulty, choice of major, decisions to change programs, stated educational goals and any personal information revealed to you by the student that is of relevance. Your notes should provide an accurate record of any advice or recommendations given to a student along with indications of whether or not your advice was followed.

- Do whatever you tell a student you will do for them.

- Follow-up on students who are doing poorly, on those who do not register, and on those who express an intention to leave UAB prior to graduation.

(This section is a compilation of tips from Plymouth St; Ohio St; Houston Baptist, p. 95, from Fogarty, 1981; Houston Baptist, p. 32, from Morehead, 1981; Utah St; ACT, p. 5.166, from Ricks; ACT, p. 5.7, from Kansas St; Stockton; ACT, p. 5.340-41, from Millikin; Houston Baptist, p. 31, from Aiken, 1976; ACT, p. 5.12)
 Roles and Stereotypes

Roles
As an academic advisor you play many roles -- expert, advocate, authority, rubber stamp, judge, teacher or friend (Kramer & Gardner, 1983). Difficulties can occur whenever student expectations about your role and your expectations about your role clash. When a student approaches you with a specific concern, they may assume that you will play a specific role.

Example: A student may see you as an authority and depend on you to tell them what courses to take. You, however, might respond from a teaching role, by giving curricular information and procedures and expecting them to learn to take responsibility for scheduling their own courses. In this case you would be expecting your students to play the role of responsible adults.

Whenever expectations are different and there is a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities, the advising experience may be difficult and unsatisfactory for everyone (Ohio St).

Common Student Stereotypes of Advisors

- **The Automat Stereotype.** This perception views advising as the "slip a coin in and get a schedule out" process whereby students and advisors interact solely for the purpose of working out a class schedule acceptable to the student at registration. Students, of course, deserve and need much more assistance from you.

- **The Thousand Mile Check-UP.** This view of advising sees the advisor as actively arranging a program of study and then superficially checking to make sure the program is running smoothly. This type of advisor is not very helpful since any "repairs" needed along the way are seen as outside the advisor's domain. This type of advisor does not communicate genuine interest to students.

- **The Patch-After-Crash-Advisor.** In this role, you are only called upon by your students in moments of crisis. The student falls, violates some academic policy, is about to be suspended and calls upon you to save the day. Unfortunately for the student, this view is usually too little too late.

- **The Malevolent Benevolency.** Advisors playing this role are mother hens, protectively hovering over students to keep them from making mistakes and playing surrogate parents. These times should be rare (i.e. the early weeks of a first term for a homesick freshman). Advising should encourage student growth and development, not hinder it. (ACT, p. 5.15-16, from Hardee, 1970)
Quick Checklist

Availability

☐ I have regularly scheduled office hours.
☐ I have time to help students when they need me.
☐ My students have little difficulty setting up appointments with me.
☐ I am especially available during registration periods.
☐ I stay in my office during office hours.
☐ I am flexible in seeing students who need immediate help who "walk-in" without an appointment.
☐ My students know when and where to find me.
☐ I spend as much time with my students as they need or want. I do not try to hurry them out.
☐ I take the initiative to have my students meet with me.

Information

☐ I keep up-to-date class schedules in my office.
☐ I keep up-to-date catalogs in my office.
☐ I keep informed about current and future career opportunities for students with a bachelor's degree in my area.
☐ I thoroughly explain to new students UAB's requirements and the requirements for the major they have chosen.
☐ I pass along to students any new information I discover which might benefit them.
☐ I encourage students to plan their courses more than one term in advance.
☐ I know enough about majors outside my area to provide assistance to students exploring alternatives.
☐ I can advise my students about opportunities for graduate study in my area.
☐ I give my students correct and up-to-date information about academic regulations.
☐ I understand course requirements, particularly for those courses on the Core Curriculum and within my area.
☐ I can help students select courses appropriate to their abilities and interests.

(ACT, p. 5.336, from Nebraska; Midstate, p. 5.304, from Drake; ACT, p. 5.386, from UNF; ACT, p. 5.396-97, from Maryland; ACT, p. 5.383 and 5.385, from OWU; Midstate, p. 5.302, from Kramer and Gardner)
ABOUT ADVISORS

☐ I serve as a university resource person for my students.
☐ I am well prepared for every appointment with each individual student.
☐ I alert my students to course prerequisites.
☐ I am flexible and actively explore alternative solutions to student problems.
☐ I am aware of my students' past academic records.
☐ I can help students with poor grades, poor study habits and weak examination skills.

(ACT, p. 5.336-38, from Nebraska; Midstate, p. 5.302, from Kramer and Gardner; ACT, p. 5.386-87, from UNF; ACT, p. 5.396, from Maryland; Midstate, p. 5.304, from Drake; ACT, p. 5.383-84, from OWU)

Trust and Caring Relationship

☐ I explain to my students what I can do to help them.
☐ When I believe a student has set an unrealistic goal, I am willing to question and explore this with them.
☐ I am interested in each student as a person and know them as unique individuals.
☐ I permit students to make their own decisions.
☐ I attempt to establish a warm and open relationship with my students.
☐ I help my students sort through their frustrations and uncertainties related to school.
☐ I focus on my students' potentialities rather than their limitations.
☐ I am interested in what the student wants, not what I want for the student.
☐ I explore the obstacles students need to overcome to reach their goals.
☐ I challenge students to higher academic performance.
☐ My students feel like they can discuss personal concerns with me.
☐ I help students make the sometimes difficult transition from high school to college.
☐ I anticipate my students' needs.
☐ I am genuinely concerned about my students.
☐ My students share their problems with me.
☐ I enjoy meeting with my students.
☐ I respect my students' feelings and opinions.
☐ When working with students, I try to remember what it is like to be an undergraduate.
I can work effectively with students whose value systems differ from mine.  
I do not hold grudges against students.  
My students respect me.  
I am patient with my students.  
I make all reasonable efforts to help each student.  
I am a source of encouragement for my students.  
I know things about my students beyond their academic lives.  
I treat all students equally, no matter their age, race, sex or religious preference.  
I deal with problems creatively, not repetitively.  

(ACT, p. 5.336-38, from Nebraska; Midstate, p. 5.302, from Kramer and Gardner; ACT, p. 5.383-85, from OWU; ACT, p. 5.396-97, from Maryland; ACT, p. 5.386-87, from UNF; Midstate, p. 5.304, from Drake; Houston Baptist, p. 125, from Jeffery, 1988; Midstate, p. 5.297, from San Jose St)

**A Final Thought**

If your students were to grade you as an academic advisor, what grade would you get?  
If you were a student, would you go to "you" as an advisor?

(Houston Baptist, p. 125, from Jeffery, 1988)
About Students

Section 3 addresses the other participant in the advising process – the student. This section contains material that is specific to UAB students, as well as information about college students in general. Specific groups of students are examined, and appropriate advising considerations for each group are given. This information is designed to be helpful in understanding the similarities between students as you seek to recognize those facets which make each of them unique individuals.
Students in Academic Difficulty

Characteristics of Students in Academic Difficulty

Students in academic difficulty

- usually have the ability to do college level work
- often set unrealistic academic goals or set no goals at all
- have a poor self image
- are often anxious and depressed
- often feel inferior
- view life in extremes as either a total success or a total failure with nothing in between
- have inefficient and disorganized study habits
- have test anxiety

(Ohio St, p. 76)

Core Assumptions for Advising Students in Academic Difficulty

Advising students in academic difficulty usually involves the establishment of: unconditional positive regard, congruence, concreteness and immediacy, and confrontation.

- **Unconditional positive regard** means accepting the student regardless of a lack of academic productivity. To be successful, students need to feel a sense of basic personal worth and potential. While academic mistakes need to be identified and corrected, behaviors may need to be altered, and some hard questions and issues may have to be addressed, students need to feel that you, as their advisor, accept them as a person.

- **Congruence** means using the student's personal frame of reference as the basis for developing an action plan. This entails being sensitive to where students are emotionally, attitudinally and behaviorally and seeking to understand the situation from the student's point of view.

- Concreteness and immediacy moves the student from a vague, generalized problem to clarity in finding a solution. Help students take a specific, concrete and detailed approach to their problems and necessary corrections. What does "I'm going to study more this term" actually mean? How much more? Starting when? In this case helping a student sit down and detail a concrete, written study schedule might be one way to make the problem and solution tangible and immediate.
• Confrontation helps the student accept responsibility for their academic performance. Many students in academic difficulty see life as totally out of control -- their roommates distract them; their professors are hard to understand, or unfair, or just don't like them; their bosses make them work long hours; you gave them bad advice. Without acknowledging some responsibility for their situation they are unlikely to change. These realizations don't always come easily and you may need to ask some hard, bottom-line questions that confront and create the challenge and frustration necessary for change.

(Ohio St, p. 76-77)

Advising Students in Academic Difficulty

Two steps are necessary to effectively advise students in academic difficulty: identification and assessment of the reasons for their poor academic performance and implementation of specific actions to correct their situation. Your role is to help them identify problems and alternative plans of action (Ohio St, p. 76).

Step 1: Assessment

To identify a student's needs, characteristics and causal relationships and problems, you need to have information from both what the student says and from your own observations. Since students are sometimes unable to recognize the causes of their difficulties, you may need to integrate all available information for them. To do this you can:

• operationally define the student's behavior by clarifying vague responses (ex. what does it mean for a student to say they study “a lot”?)

• identify conflicts and distractions that may have caused difficulty

• group behavior into recurring themes. Poor time management, interpersonal conflict and test anxiety are potentially all rooted in confused or conflicting priorities (Ohio St, p. 76, 78).

As you assess the problem and try to determine the reasons for poor academic performance make sure to encourage the student's participation in identifying the problem (Weber St, p. 4-7). It is also important to provide students with "reality checks" by calculating their grade point deficiency and explaining to them what that deficiency means.
ABOUT STUDENTS

Step 2: Construction of an Action Plan
For any plan to work, a student must commit themselves to specific steps to improve their academic performance. Good action plans will:

- identify appropriate resources and services to help the student make necessary behavioral changes
- specify where, how and when steps will be taken. Vagueness and a lack of specificity is a frequent characteristic of students in academic difficulty.
- establish a system to monitor the student's efforts and progress. Some students may need or want to see you weekly, biweekly or at midterm.

The plan should be specific, incorporate a timetable and have at its center realistic and attainable academic goals. (Ohio St, p. 78)

Faculty Action Plans
In an effort to improve their GPA, students sometimes make errors in judgment. Try to steer students away from the following:

Error #1. Enrolling in too many classes
Students think they can "get it all back" in one heroic attempt and erase their grade point deficiencies in a single term.

Response: Students with academic difficulty should think about fewer hours instead of more. If a student is having difficulty in four classes, it is hard to believe they will do better with five. In fact, they likely will do worse since an extra class multiplies the amount of time and effort required. After all, a student who earns more average grades makes up less deficiency than a student who takes fewer classes but makes better grades.

Error #2. Avoiding repeating courses with below average grades
Students fear the courses they have not been successful in and seek to avoid them again if at all possible. They hope to make up bad grades by balancing them with good grades in other courses.

Response: Unless a student lacks a prerequisite, students with below-average grades in a course usually should repeat that class as soon as possible. Most improve their grade when they repeat a course since their prior exposure to it makes them aware of requirements and study needs.
Error #3. Attempting to withdraw after the deadline

Students sometimes believe they will receive special consideration because of their situation and expect to withdraw to protect their GPA's. Even when students get a form signed for a W, some fail to turn in the form to the Registrar's Office and therefore miss the deadline to W.

Response: Emphasize that administration adheres strictly to the deadline to withdraw unless there is a medical emergency or death.

Error #4. Failing to resolve notations of I and N within the time limit

Students hope that they can do nothing and have the Registrar's office ignore their incomplete grades. Sometimes they're afraid that completing the grade (ex. replacing "N" with a grade) will hurt them more than it will help.

Response: Students who do not resolve incomplete grades usually suffer more serious consequences than if they resolve the incompletes. At UAB, N's and I's change to F's after one term. If a student transfers to another university, that school may count their incompletes as F's. You need to inform students of the significance of leaving incompleted courses unresolved.

Error #5. Taking advanced courses with a weak background

Many students feel pressured to graduate "on time" and feel they must not interrupt the sequence of courses for any reason.

Response: In some majors, students should repeat courses, even when they earn passing grades, if they aren't prepared to continue the sequence. Advanced courses in any major are almost always difficult and students need to understand the content of basic courses before proceeding.

Error #6. Taking courses on the advice of a friend

Students sometimes think that courses that are "easy" for their friends will automatically be "easy" for them.

Response: Friends have good intentions, but what is "easy" for one student may be almost impossible for another to master. If a student chooses to listen to a friend's advice, then they need to make sure they understand why, in the friend's opinion, the course was not difficult.

Error #7. Taking only courses in their major or only Core Curriculum courses

Some students want to get all the Core out of the way first while others do not want to take any basics.

Response: Either type of student may become discouraged and lose sight of the relevance of a total education. It is usually best to encourage a balanced schedule of coursework.
Error #8. Seeking help too late in the term

Students who want to succeed on their own tend to seek help only when it is too late.

Response: Academic self-reliance is a myth. Some students believe that if they need or ask for help then they must be unfit or unqualified for college. Students should be reassured that the use of support services is part of the total academic experience.

(Weber St, p. 4-8a - 4-8c; Houston Baptist, p. 59-62; Russell, 1981, p. 56-68)
ABOUT STUDENTS

Students Needing Academic Alternatives

Students in need of selecting an alternative major usually cannot enter their program of choice because of

- stringent school or departmental requirements or
- increasing competition for slots in majors, which teach only a limited number of students.

These students are different from undecided students in that they have made a decision on a major, may have earned a significant number of semester hours towards the program, but have found entry into the major blocked.

While most advisors see students in need of alternatives, certain areas are more affected than others. At UAB, these include nursing, business, engineering, education and the health professions.

How Students End Up Needing Alternatives

Some students needing alternative majors may have set unrealistic goals for themselves because they lack the background, ability or diligence to pursue the academic work required. Their self-perceptions and academic or career objectives may not be congruent. An unrealistic assessment of abilities, a lack of information or a need for job security might lead students into unrealistic, unattainable choices (Ohio St, p. 66).

Advising Students In Need of Alternative Majors

Several suggestions for advising students needing alternative majors include:

- Give each student personalized help. Students in need of alternatives vary from the Pre-Nursing student who has been rejected from the program, to the Engineering student who cannot complete the calculus sequence, to the Business student who cannot meet the 2.0 GPA entrance requirement. Some may have low GPA's; others may be better than average. The main concern is identifying the available options that are appropriate for a particular student.

- Have the student spend some time accepting their situation. Many times students will need to grieve over what amounts to the loss of a dream. Part of this process may include feelings of anger, frustration, depression and sadness.

- Help the student search for alternatives in an organized way. Formulate a plan and a timetable for helping students make a solid alternate choice.

"Typically these students need to spend some time accepting their situation, examining alternatives in an organized way, and formulating academic plans for their new major" (Ohio St, p. 66).
ABOUT STUDENTS

Undecided Students

Types of Undecided Students
All undecided students are not alike. They may be:

- **completely undecided** (25%)

- **tentatively undecided** (50%) - have a couple of ideas about a major but need time and information before deciding

- **uncommitted undecided** (25%) - have made a tentative choice but unwilling to commit

Others choose a major when they apply to UAB but are only tentatively decided and need to confirm that decision. Others make decisions prematurely by making choices that are unrealistic or uninteresting to them. Since estimates are that 70% of all students change their major at least once before graduating, almost all students need the same academic and career exploration services that undecided students need.

A number of studies have shown that undecided students are **no different from students who have declared majors**.

(Midstate, p. 433 and p. 5.276, from Gordon, 1981; Ohio St, p. 65)

Correlates of Indecision
Closely related to the issue of undecidedness are the following concerns:

- **Data seeking orientation.** Students may need information on which to base a decision. They often need a realistic basis for making judgments.

- **Self-identity concerns.** Some do not feel pressure to make an academic or career choice, but are more interested in self-discovery.

- **Multiplicity of interests.** Many undecided students have a lot of ideas about a major. These possibilities compete for consideration.

- **Anxiety.** Some are uncomfortable about being undecided.

- **Humanitarian orientation.** Sometimes students feel the need to choose majors that benefit society. Many have an interest in the social sciences and humanities but do not know how to direct that interest.

(Ohio St, p. 65, from Appel, Haak, Witzke, 1970)


**Advising Undecided Students**
You can help undecided students with

- self assessment
- information gathering
- interpretation of available information
- development of decision making skills

and by

- working with each student at their particular level of development
- giving them time to explore their options

*(Ohio St, p. 65)*

**Specific Strategies for Undecideds**
The following list is not intended to be inclusive or exclusive. Students may be undecided for a variety of reasons and many of these approaches can be used over a period of time (Chan from Midstate, p. 5.276, from Gordon, 1981).

**Postulated Levels, Antecedents and Interventions for Undecided Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Undecidedness</th>
<th>Possible Causes of Antecedents</th>
<th>Possible Approaches or Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMPLETELY UNDECIDED</td>
<td>Looking for one &quot;right&quot; choice</td>
<td>Help explore cause of undecidedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(considering no choice)</td>
<td>Lack of value identity</td>
<td>Teach decision-making skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not identifying or using known</td>
<td>Help identify values and interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interest patterns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unclear about abilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to organize ideas</td>
<td>Sex-role identity counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex-stereotyping narrow options</td>
<td>Anxiety counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feels no pressure to decide (not</td>
<td>Help organize educational/career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivated)</td>
<td>information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resisting parental/societal</td>
<td>Begin to generate alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pressures to choose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Few hobbies or extracurricular</td>
<td>Dispel myths about career choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experiences</td>
<td>process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No information about occupations</td>
<td>Help identify and test abilities and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little or no work experiences</td>
<td>skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage work/volunteer experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore through academic course work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Undecidedness</td>
<td>Possible Causes of Antecedents</td>
<td>Possible Approaches or Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TENTATIVELY DECIDED</td>
<td>Multiplicity of interests</td>
<td>Help clarify values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Considering two or more choices)</td>
<td>Value conflict/confusion</td>
<td>Help organize information about self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate or misinformation about alternatives</td>
<td>Help gather information about alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General inability to make decisions</td>
<td>Help combine best elements of alternatives into one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unsure of abilities for choices</td>
<td>Anxiety counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reluctance to give up any one choice</td>
<td>Teach decision-making skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempting to please others</td>
<td>Force-field analysis of each alternative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| UNCOMMITTED DECIDED     | Resisting outside pressure to declare choice | Teach decision-making skills |
| (Choice made but not ready to take action) | Inadequate information about choice | Time |
|                         | Unsure of ability for choice | Help check accuracy of information |
|                         | No direct occupational application for educational choice | Anxiety counseling |
|                         | High competition in choice opposite sex from those dominating occupation, e.g., males in nursing | Help confirm accuracy of self-information |
|                         | Job market known to be poor | Help clarify values implicit in choice |
|                         | Rewards not adequate | Help determine life goals |
|                         |                          | Reassurance, support |
|                         |                          | Dispel myth of "one right choice" |
|                         |                          | Help acquire additional information about choice |
Advising Major Changers

Students who change their majors fall into several different categories. Advising strategies for major changers is best targeted to the specific type and characteristics of each student. The following list of suggestions should help (chart from Midstate, p. 5.277, from Gordon).

**THE MIND CHANGERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>POSSIBLE CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>POSSIBLE APPROACHES OR INTERVENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE DRIFTERS</td>
<td>Know change is needed. Seek help only when forced by scheduling or procedural problems. Anxiety has been dormant so often surfaces during conference. No plans for solving dilemma. Sometimes lazy or procrastinates in other areas of life.</td>
<td>Often need in-depth advising which involves self-assessment and academic exploration. Provide structure for orderly search. Teach decision-making skills. Help formulate action plan. Insist on follow-up. Provide support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOSET-CHANGERS</td>
<td>Have changed majors in head many times but have told no one – least of all their advisor. May stay in wrong major for many terms. Tend to schedule selves into seemingly out-of-place courses. Ignore advisor's letters.</td>
<td>Contact personally when possible to check motives behind strange course scheduling. Insist on and help make appointment with advisor in new area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTERNALS</td>
<td>Change majors frequently. Will seek and use advice of everyone external to selves. May wander around advisor's office looking for someone &quot;nice&quot; to talk to. May also be Closet-Changers in that they don't tell current advisor they are changing. Totally unorganized about search.</td>
<td>Encourage exploration of different ideas but help structure in orderly way. Provide printed materials and name of faculty, etc. to obtain information. Help organize a plan of action. Insist on follow-up within given time frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE UP-TIGHTERS</td>
<td>Sweaty palms. Anxious. May appear depressed. Often worry about what others will say about making change. Confused about area they are changing to or could be Externals with many ideas.</td>
<td>Find cause of anxiety and deal with it immediately. Try to help student become rational about problem. Provide structure, e.g., identify alternatives provide information, give referrals. Provide support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE</td>
<td>POSSIBLE CHARACTERISTICS</td>
<td>POSSIBLE APPROACHES OR INTERVENTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ZOMBIES</td>
<td>Original decision thwarted. Only idea they ever had. Often lack ability for area or have been rejected from selective admissions program for other reasons. Cannot accept this has happened. Absolutely no alternatives on surface. Can also be Up-Tighters.</td>
<td>Convey support. Help face problems realistically. Positive approach to generating options which could be just as satisfactory. Show how course work fits into other majors and try to adapt these to planning exploration of new alternatives. Patience. Provide structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE EXPERTS</td>
<td>Know it all. Never seek advice. &quot;Have job waiting in field.&quot; Schedule courses without prerequisites; tend to neglect Core. May sign up for graduate or senior level courses (I can handle it). Ignore advisor's letters. Major chosen is totally unrealistic for given abilities.</td>
<td>Point out possible dangers of self-advisement. Try to help face possibility of unrealistic choice. Take assertive action to help them declare a realistic major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SYSTEMATICS</td>
<td>Have gathered excellent information about new area. Have talked to faculty in new area. Have determined own interests and abilities fit this area and academic record confirms they can succeed. Excited about change. Look forward to course work in new area.</td>
<td>Easy to work with!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students Needing Career Advising

Principles for Career Decisions
Students need to keep the following principles in mind before beginning to make career decisions.

• Choosing a career is a life-long process. Students are only at one decision point in a long series of choices.

• The career decision-making process includes self-knowledge and occupational knowledge. Integrating these two types of information helps students identify realistic alternatives.

• Choosing a career can be a complicated process which requires a lot of thought and effort. Students exercise more control over this decision by pursuing it in an orderly manner.

• There is no right or wrong decision - only satisfying or unsatisfying ones.

• Gender, race or age should not be used as barriers to exploring career options.

(Ohio St, p. 53)

Types of Knowledge Necessary to Make Good Career Decisions
There are four types of knowledge which students need before making career decisions: self-knowledge, occupational knowledge, educational knowledge and decision making knowledge.

Self knowledge means the student knows about

• Interests (What do I like and enjoy?)
• Aptitudes (What are my strengths? Skills? Abilities?)
• Values (What is important to me in a career?)
• Goal setting (Where do I want to go? What do I want? How can I get there? By when?)
ABOUT STUDENTS

Occupational knowledge means the student knows about

- Nature of work (What tasks are involved? What are the major duties of a job? What does someone with this job do all day?)
- Places of employment (Where is the work?)
- Qualifications and advancement (What is entry level expertise? What type of experience is needed? Are promotion opportunities available?)
- Employment outlook (What will the job market be like at graduation? In 5 years? years?)
- Earnings and working conditions (What is the pay range? Are there physical demands to the job? What kinds of other rewards or satisfactions come from this job?)
- Job seeking skills (Can I write a resume? Do I know how to conduct myself in interview? Can I investigate an organization? Obtain references?)

Educational knowledge means the student asks

- Are there specific educational programs that will provide me with any necessary knowledge or skills?
- What majors interest me?
- Are there particular courses that will help?
- Is a particular degree necessary or can I select any major or program?

Decision making knowledge means the student asks

- Can I link self-knowledge to occupational information?
- What kind of decision-maker am I?
- When do I need to make career decisions?
- Can I integrate my values into my decisions?
- Do I know how to choose between several majors?

(Ohio St, p. 57-58; ACT, p. 5.181-83 from Nebraska-Lincoln)
Helping Students with Career Decisions

Students are sometimes confused or don't know about the career planning process. They may not know where or how to start, who to talk to, how to identify options, how to choose from various alternatives or how to implement a decision. As an academic advisor you can

- help students understand the relationship between educational choices and careers
- refer students to appropriate career resources on campus
- encourage academic and occupational exploration
- provide support

(Ohio St, p. 53)
About Students

Student Responsibility

One of your roles as academic advisor is to help students assume responsibility for their actions. But as you already know, students come to you at varying stages of development.

They may

- appear mature and sophisticated but actually be very unsure of themselves in new situations such as college.
- want to become dependent on you and expect you to do things for them that they should do for themselves.
- be able to handle their own responsibilities.

(Ohio St, p. 22)

And just as the student's level of responsibility may or may not be apparent, so too their expectations of you may or may not be obvious. There are limits to your responsibility to your students and they need to know what these limits are (Ohio St).

Student Responsibilities in Advising

Because advising is interactive, students bear responsibility in the process. **General responsibilities** include:

- developing and clarifying values and goals
- becoming familiar with campus resources
- knowing about degree requirements
- owning a catalog and being familiar with it
- understanding the information in the class schedule
- monitoring progress towards a degree
- following departmental or School requirements
- keeping copies of relevant academic records
- knowing about University policies, procedures and requirements
- keeping copies of schedule transactions, including registration records and withdrawal forms, and correspondence
- seeking out-of-class activities relevant to their major
- abiding by published deadlines
- meeting course prerequisites
ABOUT STUDENTS

- registering and obtaining appropriate signatures on forms
- providing to Admissions official transcripts of coursework taken at other institutions
- applying for a degree within specified deadlines

Student responsibilities in advising include:

- discussing their long-range goals with you, including possible job opportunities
- discussing their choice of a major with you
- making final decisions about choices concerning academic matters
- being able to ask intelligent questions about their degree program
- keeping copies of evaluations you give them
- keeping you informed about things like schedule changes, academic problems, change of major, etc.
- making regular appointments with you and seeking help from you when needed
- preparing in advance for every meeting with you, including having possible course options outlined for registration advising
- keeping advising appointments and being on time
- gathering all decision making information
- following through on referrals
- asking questions about what they don't understand
- knowing who you are

(ACT, p. 3.39-40; Plymouth St, p. 1-2; Bucks Co., p. 8; Houston Baptist, p. 26 from ACT; Utah St; Weber St, p. 1-4; Bunker Hill, p. 18)

The most important thing to remember about student responsibility is that the student should accept responsibility for decisions and academic choices (Bucks Co., p. 8; Houston Baptist, p. 26 from ACT; Utah St).
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Because of the differences between students (and between people in general) it is helpful for academic advisors to understand the variety of preferences among people.

About MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) provides value free descriptions of how individuals prefer to function. An individual's answers to a series of questions indicate which of two equally desirable ways to function someone prefers. Individuals function naturally in accordance with these preferences although it is possible and often necessary for people to act against their preferences. (Psychological Myers-Briggs Type Differences in Education, p. 96; Ohio St, p. 30, from Gordon and Carberry, 1984)

Explanation of Types

The MBTI is concerned with four dimensions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
<th>Does the person's interest flow mainly to the outer world of actions, objects, and persons</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>Introversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Sensing</td>
<td>Does the person prefer to perceive the immediate, real, solid facts of experience</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>Does the person prefer to make judgments or decisions objectively and impersonally, analyzing facts and ordering them in terms of cause and effect</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Judging</td>
<td>Does the person prefer to live in a planned, orderly way, aiming to regulate and control events</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Perceiving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Typology Laboratory, University of Florida November 5, 1974

(Psychological Myers-Briggs Type Differences in Education, p. 97; hereafter cited as PTDE)
ABOUT STUDENTS

Extroverts
There are about three extroverts for every introvert in the population.

- prefer lives of sociability and action
- jump in first and then think
- understand things better after experiencing them
- like to be involved
- like a broad range of experiences
- like to learn in and work with groups
- like to get out and do things
- may have more confidence than is actually justified
- plunge into new experiences, working by trial and error
- like to talk over things with others
- are interested in other people
- readily offer opinions
- share personal experiences
- want to experience things so as to understand them
- ask questions to check on the expectations of the group or teacher
- have a relatively short attention span
- attend to interruptions

(PTDE, p. 100; People Types and Tiger Stripes)

Introverts
Introverts are the opposite of extroverts.

- reflect before acting, sometimes so long that they forget to act at all
- learn from new situations much better after the idea is made clear
- are concerned with the concepts and ideas which help make life understandable
- like to go deeply into problems
- like time to think and work alone
- like to understand new experiences before being put into them
ABOUT STUDENTS

• may describe themselves as less adequate than they actually are
• hold back from new experiences
• perform better in written work than oral presentations
• pause before answering and show discomfort with spontaneous questioning
• ask questions to understand before attempting to do something
• are hard to understand, quiet and shy; seem "deep"
• prefer setting own standards when possible
• have a small number of carefully selected friends
• work intently on the task at hand
• prefer jobs that can be done inside the head

(PTDE, p. 101, 171; People Types and Tiger Stripes)

Sensing
Sensing individuals like to become aware of things directly through the five senses (Gifts Differing, p. 2). Sensing children do not want to deal with anything unexplainable (PTDE, p. 128). These types outnumber intuitive three to one and

• are interested in looking at what they can see, touch, hear, taste and smell
• are interested in the solid and real, the facts of the case, and the details of events
• have concrete based intellect, stressing fact over theory and reality over imagination
• are realistic and practical
• are intensely aware of the environment
• are more observant than imaginative
• are pleasure loving and contented
• prefer memorizing rather than finding out reasons
• change moods as physical surroundings change
• learn best from an orderly progression of sequential details
• bring up pertinent facts
• keep accurate track of details, make lists
• are good at checking, inspecting, reading the fine print
ABOUT STUDENTS

- like established routines
- work steadily all the way through to a conclusion without bursts of energy or slack periods
- are impatient or frustrated with complicated situations

(PTDE, p. 102; People Types and Tiger Stripes)

Intuition
This type prefers to indirectly perceive things by way of the unconscious (Gifts Differing, p. 2).

- see with the mind's eye, going beyond observable facts to possibilities, meanings and relationships of things
- favor abstraction and symbolic reasoning
- focus on imagination, new possibilities, theory and the development of verbal aptitude
- prefer seeing things in new ways
- don't want to be bored by anything tedious or dull
- pay more attention to the whole concept than to details
- are aware of only personally relevant aspects of the external environment
- see possibilities that others miss
- are quick at finding solutions
- don't always hear others out and are impatient with sustained sensing functions
- look far ahead, furnishing new ideas
- like spotting problems and solving them
- jump to conclusions

(PTDE, p. 103, 128; People Types and Tiger Stripes)

Thinking
Thinking types come to conclusions through a logical process aimed at an impersonal finding (Gifts Differing, p. 3-4). They

- operate on a true-false dimension
- develop a logical formula to live by
- are objective, analytical and concerned with cause-effect relationships
ABOUT STUDENTS

• may be proficient in the use of tools and equipment, or good in math or science, do well with anything that works on logical principles
• prefer critical thinking
• are logical and analytical
• take facts, theories, and the discovery of truth seriously
• take seriously the solution of practical problems
• treat emotional relationships and ideals casually
• expose things that are wrong about other's habits, customs or beliefs
• are offended by illogic
• hold firmly to policy and conviction
• are upset by injustice
• are not aware of how their own actions affect other people's feelings

(PTDE, p. 104; People Types and Tiger Stripes)

Feeling
In opposition to thinking types, feeling individuals come to conclusions by appreciation, bestowing on things a personal, subjective value (Gifts Differing, p. 3-4). This definition does not refer to emotional outbursts, but to how judgements are made. For this type, judgements are made based on a subjective weighing of the relative merits or values of alternatives (PTDE, p. 105). People who prefer this

• operate on a valued/non-valued dimension
• know what is important to people and develop a sensitivity to interpersonal relationships
• like personal relationships
• take emotional relationships and ideals very seriously
• are offended by a lack of personal consideration in others
• are motivated by others
• are compliant
• permit feelings to override logic
• can forecast how others will feel
• generate enthusiasm
• are upset by conflicts

(PTDE, p. 105; People Types and Tiger Stripes)
ABOUT STUDENTS

Judging
Judging types

• prefer to have things decided or settled
• look for just enough to make up their mind in new situations
• like following schedules and being consistent
• favor long range planning, with systematic and orderly approaches to tasks at hand
• are responsible, dependable people who get things done on time if they judge effectively
• can be dogmatic and authoritarian if they judge without really seeing the situation first
• have their minds made up
• base friendship upon beliefs, standards and tastes which are assumed to be shared
• have enduring friendships
• are orderly, organized and systematic
• persevere

Perceiving
In opposition to judging, perceiving types

• meet life with expectant curiosity
• want to know more about new situations
• make up their minds only when they have to
• favor flexibility, spontaneity and the excitement of something new turning up all the time
• can procrastinate, drift and become indecisive if rigid in this attitude
• may not plan, act spontaneously
• depend on experience
• are uncritical

(PTDE, p. 106; People Types and Tiger Stripes)
ABOUT STUDENTS

- base friendships on proximity and shared experience
- can easily and often drop friendships, forget them, and resume them
- leave things open

(PTDE, p. 107; People Types and Tiger Stripes)

Academic Implications of the Types

Academic differences between the types of the MBTI exist and have consequences for education. In general:

- Intuitives have greater skills at reading, which uses symbols to understand verbal meanings.
- Sensing types, who are naturally more interested in the real thing than in reading words about something, have less natural interest in reading and are less motivated to learn to read unless they can see a practical use for reading.
- Intuitives average higher on aptitude measures than Sensing types, most likely because aptitude tests stress the ability to derive meanings quickly from written words.
- In one study, Intuitives scored higher on a measure of study skills.
- Sensing students are more interested in doing something with almost any tangible object, than in listening to what anyone is saying. Listening only becomes interesting if it has to do with action or adds something definite to their picture of the physical world. As a result, sensing students may be more interested in active participation rather than in lecture only type classes.
- As most schools are now run, Sensing children have less use for school than Intuitive children do (often no use at all), on the average make lower grades and score lower on intelligence tests (though not low enough to account for their grades), and more frequently drop out.

(PTDE, p. 117-18, 123, 127)

Type and Advising

As an academic advisor, you may need to adjust your advising style to meet a student's preferred way of dealing with the college environment, processing information and making decisions. Keep the following in mind when advising students:

- Intuitive students may need you to challenge them on the realities of decisions about major choice, course load, and study habits. Intuitives tend to be idealists with little consideration of the practical implications of decisions.
- Sensing students usually need to develop the ability to generate possibilities and solutions to problems and decisions.
ABOUT STUDENTS

- Because introverts comprise only about 30% of the college population, they may need special support from you. They may find public speaking classes, large social gatherings, or crowded residence halls threatening to their preferred nature. They still, however, need to develop social and interpersonal skills.

- Extroverts tend to like discussion-centered classes and those requiring active participation while introverts may find these stressful. Introverts prefer the lecture format while extroverts may become restless in these types of classes.

- Extroverts may need to develop abilities to work alone and concentrate.

(Ohio St, p. 30-31; Anchors, p. 121-22)

As an advisor, your goal is not to help students avoid all challenges to their type. Rather, help students achieve a balance between the classes that help develop their less-preferred areas and classes that allow additional development of their natural strengths and preferences (Anchors, p. 121).
Developmental Theory

Perry’s Model
William Perry’s study of students reveals an orderly progression of development throughout the college years. He has arrived at four stages of development that reflect the cognitive changes that college students seem to undergo; dualism, multiplicity, relativism and commitment (Midstate, p. 5.268, from Gordon).

Stage 1: Dualism
These students have a simplistic approach to reasoning. They think of you and their instructors as authorities with right answers, whether it be choosing a college major or determining the reasons for World War II. Their perception of the world is absolute and no self-processing is evident (Midstate, p. 5.268-69, from Gordon). They

- see the world in polar terms, i.e., right vs. wrong, good vs. bad
- are looking for simplistic answers; believe there are right and wrong answers
- know hard work and obedience pay off
- are externally controlled
- view a diversity of opinions as confusion on the part of unqualified authorities
- like order and structure with concrete and absolute categories
- see uncertainty as an error
- want prescriptive information

(Midstate, p. 5.270, from Gordon; McKalip & Webb, 1989 NACADA presentation)

Stage 2: Multiplicity
As students move into multiplicity, they begin to take more responsibility for their own learning but are still controlled by external forces such as parents, peers, faculty or the job market. They understand the possibility of right or wrong career decisions and turn to you to eliminate dissonance and decrease the possibility of a wrong decision. Multiplistic students understand that multiple good choices exist and realize that evaluating choices is part of the decision-making process. They begin to understand that advisors may not have the "right answer" and begin to question the process itself (Midstate, p. 5.269, from Gordon). They

- are capable of more complex reasoning
- begin to see causal relationships
- know uncertainty is unavoidable but see it as only temporary
- view diversity as legitimate but see it as only temporary; think authority hasn't found the answer yet
ABOUT STUDENTS

- believe everyone has a right to their own opinion; all points of view are valid
- are unable to evaluate points of view
- have a shifting locus of control
- value peer opinions in decision making

(Midstate, p. 5.270, from Gordon; McKalip & Webb, 1989 NACADA presentation)

Stage 3: Relativism
Students in this stage can synthesize diverse and complex elements of reasoning. They have made a decision and are in charge of their own lives. Life choices are tailored to their own needs and interests. Uncertainty is seen as legitimate (Midstate, p. 5.269, from Gordon). They
- have an internal focus of control
- see themselves as prime focus in decision making
- can reason analytically
- know they must make some form of personal commitment in some area
- recognize a diversity of opinions and values
- are able to analyze and compare
- value authorities for their expertise
- depend on the context of a situation
- look at the bigger picture
- find it difficult to make a decision because of difficulty with having several choices

(Midstate, p. 5.270, from Gordon; McKalip & Webb, 1989 NACADA presentation)

Step 4: Commitment
Few reach this stage during their college years. Career choices have become a conscious part of identity. They recognize commitment as an on-going process that requires continual efforts to integrate new experiences and knowledge (Midstate, p. 5.270, from Gordon). They
- accept a pluralistic world
- commit to certain area
- accept responsibility for their commitment
- are committed to establishing their identity
ABOUT STUDENTS

- act on their commitment
- have a sense of self
- have an internal focus of control

(Midstate, p. 5.270, from Gordon; McKalip & Webb, 1989 NACADA presentation)

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVISING

It is generally not too difficult to advise students in the latter stages of development - they are either committed or moving rapidly towards commitment. Your work with students in the first two stages, however, is more demanding. Freshmen and most undecided students may be found in the dualistic or multiplistic stages (Midstate, p. 5.269, from Gordon).

Strategies for Advising Dualistic Students

Dualistic students are looking for the "right" college major and think there is a test they can take that will show them what this is. They expect you as their advisor to tell them which area to choose. They are also looking for the perfect job and spouse. Your challenge is to help move them into a more multiplistic view of the world (Midstate, p. 5.268-69, 5.271, from Gordon). You can

- show them a diversity of choices and open them to alternative perspectives
- provide experiential learning
- shift responsibility to them
- provide order and structure but they make choices
- provide contact with peers challenge them to see more than one point of view
- refer them to campus activities
- give them specific assignments
- provide much personal support

(McKalip & Webb, 1989 NACADA presentation)

Strategies for Advising Multiplistic Students

These students may have several majors in mind and are capable of weighing each alternative. You can encourage self-processing by helping multiplistic students examine their interests, abilities and values as these relate to the alternatives they have identified. It is important to offer encouragement and support as students begin to assume the responsibility for decision making (Midstate, p. 5.271, from Gordon). You can

- encourage evaluation of choices
- teach decision making skills
ABOUT STUDENTS

- structure ways for students to gather information
- help them examine the relationship between self and choices
- refer them to resources to gather information connect them to peers

(McKalip & Webb, 1989 NACADA presentation)

Chickering's Developmental Tasks
In addition to Perry’s scheme, Chickering (1969) has identified seven developmental tasks that are typical of traditional age college students. As an academic advisor, be aware of these tasks in order to help students successfully achieve them.

1. Developing Competence
   A. Intellectual competence
   B. Physical and manual competence
   C. Social-interpersonal competence

2. Managing Emotions
   A. Awareness of feelings and reliance on them
   B. Legitimate expression of hate and anger
   C. Insistent sexual impulses
   D. Issues of interpersonal relationships and identity

3. Developing Autonomy
   A. Reduction of need to depend on parents
   B. Freedom from need for constant reassurance and approval
   C. Development of interdependency and recognition of boundaries of personal choice

4. Establishing Identity
   A. Dependent on how to accomplish first three tasks above
   B. Clarification of physical needs, personal appearance and sex roles and behaviors

5. Freeing Interpersonal Relationships
   A. Development of tolerance for other cultures, backgrounds, values
   B. Appreciation of individuals, not stereotypes
   C. Development of relationships of trust, independence and individuality
   D. Warmth, openness and friendliness; reactions not anxious or defensive
E. Development of intimate relationships with opposite sex; sensitivity to other's feelings
F. Ability to love and be loved

6. Developing Life Purpose
   A. Established educational goals
   B. Awareness of work world; initial implementation of vocational decision
   C. Identification of appropriate life style
   D. Tentative commitment to future plans

7. Developing Integrity
   A. Clarification of internally consistent beliefs
   B. Personalization of values; congruence between beliefs and actions

   (Ohio St, p. 26)
Characteristics Students Exhibit in the Cognitive Development Process

William G. Perry Model
About Communications

Section IV deals with the message component of the communication model used for this handbook. The section begins by addressing general communication techniques and strategies essential for academic advisors. Included here is information on questioning as well as listening. The last half of the section deals with the specific types of conferences/communications that are common in advising. Among the specific communications examined within this part of Section IV are decision-making, schedule planning and registration along with a different type of communication, the group advising session.
Communication and Learning

Advising and Learning
At the center of the advising process is the communication between advisor and student. The purpose of this communication is to help the student, and helping them usually means that they have learned something during the time they spent with you (ACT, p. 5.62, from Ricks College). There are ways that you can facilitate a student's learning through communication.

Communication Barriers to Learning
Learning is obstructed

- if the ideas or vocabulary used are over the student's head. Be careful about assuming that students understand college terminology - they may not know what things like credit hour, major or Core mean.
- if a student is fearful, excited or concerned about some distracting personal problem. Be willing to discuss these with students.
- if too many ideas or facts are discussed at one time. Avoid information overload.
- if there is no opportunity to participate in the learning experience. Let the student talk!
- if there is not an attitude of acceptance. Students who feel their ideas are not accepted do not learn.

( ACT, P. 5.62-64, from Ricks College)

Communicating to Improve Learning
You can help your students learn by the manner in which you communicate. In particular,

- Interest and understanding are communicated when you are not in a hurry. Students need to feel that you have time for them.
- Interest and understanding are communicated when you listen. Most students don't need to be talked to; they need to be heard. Hasty generalizations about a student's problem and misinformation result when you don't get the whole story.
- Interest and understanding are communicated when a student's own ideas are recognized and respected and when his or her strengths are emphasized. You can do this by helping the student identify, analyze and suggest solutions to their own problems.
ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS

- Interest and understanding are communicated when individuals work out the best solutions for themselves. You can make suggestions which may give direction to a student's efforts, but they must accept responsibility for their decision and for subsequent action.

- Interest and understanding are communicated when other resources are used. You can be more helpful when you refer students to on-campus resources.

- Interest and understanding are communicated when the student makes tangible decisions and plans. For your part, evaluate the effectiveness of your encounter with the student and follow through with any appropriate action needed on your part.

(Act, p. 5.62-64, from Ricks College)

**Communication Strategies for Advisors**

**Clarification**

With this technique, you try to verbalize what you think the student is saying without intellectualizing or attempting to change the content of what has been said. This gives the student a chance to see how well you understand them and gives them an opportunity to clarify any misunderstanding. It also allows the student to see their situation more impersonally (Ohio St, p. 28). Clarification

- Means asking questions to get a more complete picture.
- Is particularly useful in getting a fuller picture of the circumstances surrounding a problem.
- Concentrates on the main ideas and not the illustrative material. Examples, stories and statistics may be important but usually are not the main point.
- Sharpens concentration to hear more than vague generalities.
- Lets the other person know that you are listening.

(Houston Baptist, p. 45)

**Feedback**

Giving a student nonjudgmental feedback allows you to share what you think, feel or sense with the student. Feedback should be

- Immediate - giving feedback as soon as you understand what is being said
- Honest - expressing your true feelings
- Supportive - being sensitive in your reactions to what you hear.

(Houston Baptist, p. 45)
Empathy
Empathy involves an attempt to **put yourself in the student's place as if you were that student.** The best way to show empathy is to concentrate on what the student is saying and focus your attention on their words, ideas and feelings (Houston Baptist, p. 45).

Openness
To be open means to **listen without judging.** Everyone (including advisors) has their own prejudices and pre-dispositions, but being open means allowing for these prejudgments in formulating your feedback (Houston Baptist, p. 45). Openness means accepting what the student is saying (Ohio St, p. 28). A student may be afraid that you don't approve of what they say, so you have to convey an attitude of openness so that they feel free to discuss a problem or situation with you. The cardinal rule is that if a student thinks it is a problem, it is a problem (Ohio St, p. 28; MATC; Midstate, p. 5.263).

Awareness
There are two components to listening with awareness:

- Comparing what is being said to your knowledge of history, people, and the way things are.
- Observing congruence. Does the student's tone of voice, facial expression and posture fit with the content of their communication? If body, face, voice and words fail to fit, clarify and give feedback about the discrepancy.

(Silence
**Feel comfortable with silence.** Allowing time for silence in a conference helps a student who may be trying to find the words to express what they want to say. Silence also allows a student time to digest something that was just said (Ohio St, p. 28; MATC; Midstate, p. 5.263).

Non-Committal Acknowledgement
These are **brief expressions** which communicate understanding, acceptance or empathy, such as

- “Oh”
- “Really”
- “You did, huh?”
- “I see”
- “Mm-hmm”
- “How about that”

(ACT, p. 5.81, from Effectiveness Training)
**Door Openers**
While still brief, these expressions serve as *invitations to expand* or continue a particular thought. Possibilities include

- “Tell me about it.”
- “I’d like to hear what you think.”
- “Would you like to talk about it?”
- “Let’s discuss it.”

*(ACT, p. 5.81, from Effectiveness Training)*

**Content Paraphrase**
Paraphrasing involves putting the student's message into your own words. Examples include:

- “So you really told your roommate off.”
- “You're saying that if you study more frequently your problem will be solved.”
- “Your instructor just keeps going on and on, huh?”

*(ACT, p. 5.82, from Effectiveness Training)*

Paraphrasing allows you to determine whether you understand what the student is saying. If your paraphrase isn't accurate, the student can clarify what was intended. If you can't repeat what was said, then you probably didn't get the whole message or didn't understand it (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 136, 146).

**Active Listening**
While paraphrasing involves content only, active listening involves reflecting the student's feelings. In active listening you act as a mirror for the student's feelings (Ohio St, p. 28). Examples include:

- “You sound upset about your roommate staying on the phone”
- “You're not happy about your grades.”
- “You're confused about what your instructor is trying to say.”
- “You're stumped about what to do next.”

*(ACT, p. 5.82, from Effectiveness Training)*

Make sure to reflect, not offer sympathy or advice. For example, it is better to say, “You feel your father expects you to major in pre-med” rather than “Everyone has trouble getting along with their father sometimes” (Ohio St, p. 28; MATC). “You feel that the professor is unfair to you” is much better than “No one likes that guy” (Midstate, p. 5.263).
About Communications

Non-Verbal Observation
Observing a student's behavior during a conference can help you understand feelings that are not being expressed verbally. Body language and actions can communicate feelings such as sadness or nervousness (ACT, p. 5.82, from Effectiveness Training).

Responses To Legitimate Dependency
This type of response provides information to meet straightforward needs. There is no deeper meaning or hidden agenda in a student's question (example: What is a full time load? What time can I meet with you this week?) (ACT, p. 5.82, from Effectiveness Training).

General Leads
Taking the form of questions or statements, these are intended to help a student shift thinking to a different aspect of a problem. They are designed to stimulate consideration of a new aspect of a situation. For example, in response to a student who explains that their academic difficulty is caused by their workload, you might ask, "Given the fact that you have to work full time, what sort of adjustments to your class schedule do you think might be in order?" (Ohio St, p. 28).

Openings
The first minute of a conference is particularly important because it sets the tone for what follows. To help students relax, greet them by name. Start with questions like, “How are things going?” or “How can I help?” (Ohio St, p.28; MATC; Midstate, p. 5.263).
Quick Communication Tips

- Appreciate the emotion behind your student's words.
- Check your understanding of what you hear (not what you want to hear).
- Don't interrupt. Let them tell their story first.
- Avoid distractions.
- Make sure your student has an opportunity to respond or comment about what you have said.
- Relax.
- Establish good eye contact.
- Communicate nonverbally, nodding your head and using appropriate facial expressions.
- Don't act nervous or bored.
- Respond to your student's comments.
- Ask clarifying or continuing questions to show you're listening.
- Face your students squarely. If possible, try not to sit across a desk from them but rather side-by-side.
- Watch your own body language. Maintain an "open" posture.
- Lean towards your student to show involvement.
- Recognize the student's nonverbal behavior. Look at body movements, gestures, facial expressions as well as tone of voice, emphases and pauses.
- Recognize verbal behavior. Look for feelings along with content.
- Be a reflection of what the student is feeling, based on your observations.
- Self-disclose about your experiences which support what a student is going through or feeling. Example: "I remember how tough it was to be away from home for the first time."
- Paraphrase the content of what the student has to say.
- Use indirect leads which will allow the student to choose the direction of the discussion. Example: "What would you like to talk about today?"
- Use direct leads to further explore a specific area. Example: "Tell me more about your thoughts on changing your major."
- Provide focus for the student. Example: "We're talking about a lot of things here, which one is most important for you to work on now?"
ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS

• Ask open questions which allow for more than yes or no answers.
• Take notes. Don't trust your memory where facts and data are important.
• If you don't know, admit your ignorance. If a student asks a question about something you don't know, admit it and find out the answer.
• Set limits on the conference. Make sure the student realizes there is a time limit.

(Houston Baptist, p. 84-85 from Crockett, 1988; Midstate, p. 5.263, 5.266; Ohio St, p. 28; MATC)
Common Communication Mistakes

- Talking too much. You can't listen when you're talking. Don't out talk the student.

- Not empathizing with your students.

- Not asking questions. If you don't understand or need further clarification, ask. But don't ask questions that will embarrass a student.

- Interrupting.

- Not concentrating on what is being said. Focus your attention on your student's words, ideas and feelings.

- Not looking at the student.

- Smiling inappropriately. Don't overdo it.

- Showing your emotions. Try to keep your worries, fears or problems from distracting you.

- Not controlling your anger.

- Handling objects. Put down any papers, pencils, etc. you may have in your hands since they may distract you.

- Missing the main point. Illustrative material should be examined only to see if it supports the main idea.

- Reacting to the person. Don't let your reactions to the student (good or bad) influence your interpretation of what they say. An idea may be good even if you don't like the person; an idea may be bad even though you like the person.

- Not sharing responsibility for communication. Both listeners and speakers have responsibility for the success of the communication. When you are the listener you have a responsibility to try to understand and to ask for clarification if necessary.

- Arguing mentally. This sets up a barrier between you and the student.

- Not using the difference in the speaking/thinking rate. You can listen faster than the student can talk (you speak at 100-150 words a minute but can think at 250-500 words a minute). Use this to your advantage by anticipating what the student will say, thinking back over what has been said, evaluating the student's development, etc.

- Not listening for what is NOT said. It's possible to learn as much by what someone doesn't say or avoids as by what they do talk about.
• Not listening to how something is said. Interpreting emotions and attitudes usually goes beyond exact content.

• Antagonizing the student. This can happen if you argue, criticize, take notes, don't take notes, ask questions, don't ask questions, etc. Be aware of your effect on the student and adapt.

• Not listening for personality. As someone talks, they disclose information about themselves beyond actual content such as their likes and dislikes, their motivations, their value system, etc.

• Jumping to assumptions. Don't assume that a student uses words in the same way you do; that they haven't said what they mean; that they are lying; that they are angry, etc. Assumptions like these may turn out to be true, but more often they just get in the way of your understanding.

• Stereotyping the student. Your perception of what a student says may be shaded by your own set of biases. Allow for your prejudgments.

• Making hasty judgments.

• Not analyzing a student's reasoning. Look for faulty reasoning.

• Not evaluating facts and evidence.

• Cross-examining the student. Don't fire off questions like a machine gun.

(Houston Baptist, p. 86-88, from Crockett, 1988; Ohio St, p. 28; MATC; Midstate, p. 5.263)
The Importance of Listening

Listening is important because it is not possible to effectively respond to, comprehend or remember oral messages without it (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation).

Except for breathing, listening is the single activity that we engage in the most. In one day, we spend about 70% of our waking hours communicating (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation). Of that communication time, we spend more time listening than engaging in other parts of the communication process (Cook, February 1991). Estimates suggest that we are involved in listening from 45-60% of our communication time, as compared to writing at 9%, reading at 16% and speaking at 30% (Berko, Wolvin, Wolvin, p. 131; Adler and Rodman, p. 76; Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation).

Listening and Remembering

We have all heard students say, "But I didn't know..." despite the fact that the message was delivered, sometimes more than once. And we've all seen students ask the same question several times in an orientation advising session, sometimes one after the other (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation). The reason for this is that the average American adult has a listening efficiency of only 25%, even if they are working at listening. As soon as we hear something, we start to forget it. In as little as ten minutes after we've heard a message, we can only remember 50% of it. Within two days to two months we only remember 25% of the original message (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation; Adler and Rodman, p. 78).

A study of college students by Paul Cameron of Wayne State reports that, at a lecture class, 20% of the students were actually paying attention but only 12% were actively listening. The rest were pursuing erotic thoughts (20%), reminiscing about something (20%), worrying, daydreaming, thinking about lunch or religion (8%) (Adler & Rodman, p. 77, from San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle).

Listening and Advising

At the 1990 NACADA National Conference keynote address, Dr. Alexander W. Astin pointed out that listening is the single most important skill for successful academic advising (Cook, February 1991). Your effectiveness as an advisor is largely dependent on your ability to listen. Effective listening is the key to successful academic advising because listening is the key to communication (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation).
Characteristics of Good and Bad Listeners

Good listening is not a matter of intellect but behavior, and there are ten behavioral differences between good and bad listeners.

1. **Bad listeners find the message boring**, causing them to miss most of the message.
   
   **Good listeners are selfish** and look for things in the message they can use.

2. **Bad listeners judge the delivery of the message**, noticing mispronounced words, incomplete sentences, or an accent.
   
   **Good listeners judge the content of the message**, paying attention to what is being said.

3. **Bad listeners interrupt the speaker** and are so wrapped up in self-importance that they can't wait until the speaker finishes to respond.
   
   **Good listeners wait until it is their turn**, understanding the importance of letting someone else speak. This is one of the most important listening skills to develop.

4. **Bad listeners listen for the facts only, and frequently** miss the point the speaker is trying to make. In interpersonal situations, this type of listener tends to miss important nonverbal parts of messages.
   
   **Good listeners try to find the main points of the message**; they listen for ideas. While understanding the importance of the facts, this type of listener attaches facts to central ideas to get a complete picture of what the speaker is trying to say.

5. **Bad listeners either take no notes or try to write everything down**, even in interpersonal situations.
   
   **Good listeners are flexible note takers**, using several types of note taking systems and making mental notes if necessary.

6. **Bad listeners expect the speaker to get the point across**, and feel it is the speaker's responsibility to make them understand.
   
   **Good listeners understand that listening is hard work.** Pulse rate and blood pressure rise if you are listening. Responsibility for the message should be shared between the speaker and the listener.

7. **Bad listeners are easily distracted.**
   
   **Good listeners work to stay on track**, and block out mental and physical distractions.

8. **Bad listeners resist difficult, expository material.**
Good listeners know that they need to listen to challenging information and exercise their minds.

9. **Bad listeners get carried away with emotions.** They react to "red flag" words and miss the message.

   Good listeners understand that words have no meaning in and of themselves. They know that meanings are in the people who use the words, not in the words themselves.

10. **Bad listeners get highly distracted by the extra time they have in listening situations,** daydreaming, taking mental breaks and popping in and out of awareness.

   Good listeners know that they can listen faster than the fastest talker can talk and use that time to their advantage. Since we can listen at least four times faster than the fastest speaker can talk, we can use this time to anticipate what the speaker is going to say next, mentally summarize what has been said, evaluate the evidence and listen between the lines.

   (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation)
Improving Listening Skills for Academic Advisors

There are two keys to effective listening:

- caring
- sharing responsibility for the communication with the speaker

(berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 142).

While caring is not something that can be taught, behavior can be. The following behaviors can help you, as a listener, take the necessary responsibility for communication:

1. **Keep personal records on students.** Serving as a record of the listening event, short notes placed in the student's file after each conference help you remember what has been said. You might record any identified needs, problems or decisions along with personal information ("Ricky has same birthday as I do"; "Has 6 month daughter named Amber) (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation). Don't trust your memory about what was said -- in case of a legal dispute these notes can become invaluable (Plymouth St, p. 7). You may or may not want to send these notes with the file if the student changes their major. Information should be factual and based on what the student reveals.

2. **Get ready for the listening event.** Review the student's file thoroughly before each appointment, reviewing your notes along with their academic record (Cook, 1989 NACADA conference). Prepare transcript evaluations in advance.

3. **Eliminate as many distractions as possible and try to minimize the rest.** Have the secretary or staff assistant holds your calls when a student is with you. Try to clear your desk of unrelated materials that you may have been working on before the student arrived (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation). Whenever possible, try to keep interruptions of any kind to a minimum (Houston Baptist, p. 71, from Drakeford; Adler and Rodman, p. 88; Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 144).

4. **Concentrate on what is being said.** Make a conscious decision to be an alert listener. Remember that hearing and listening are not synonymous. Listening is not an automatic event that "happens" to you -- It requires concentrated effort (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation; Houston Baptist, p. 71, from Drakeford; Adler and Rodman, p. 89; Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 144).

5. **Be selfish by figuring out what's in this for you.** Find something of interest (academic or personal) between you and your student. Looking at what is being said in light of its personal relevance improves listening (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation; Houston Baptist, p. 71, from Drakeford).
6. **Understand the student's purpose.** Does the student need help a friendly ear or a sounding board? Seek to understand the reasons a conference is taking place at this particular time (Cook, 1989 NACADA handout; Houston Baptist, p. 71, from Drakeford).

7. **Listen for the central theme of your student’s message.** Students almost always have one or more main points that they back up with examples, stories, analogies and other types of supporting material. Successful listeners search for these main points and see if the student's support bears them out (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation; Houston Baptist, p. 71, from Drakeford; Adler and Rodman, p. 89).

8. **Listen to your student as if the message will never be repeated** (Cook, 1989 NACADA presentation).

9. **Tune in to the student's nonverbal cues.** We often have to listen with our eyes as well as our ears. It has been estimated that 93% of the total meaning of a message can come from visual cues. It is important to look beyond words to the deeper meaning given to a message by facial expressions, gestures, and body movements of the speaker (Houston Baptist, p. 71, from Drakeford; Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 134, 145).

10. **Stop talking.** Besides the obvious, listeners “talk” to themselves by silently debating a speaker or rehearsing how they want to respond. The first step to better listening is to keep quiet when a student speaks (Adler and Rodman, p. 88-89).

11. **Ask questions.** This is a way to make sure you are hearing what your student is saying (Adler and Rodman, p. 89).

12. **Suspend your judgment of the student.** One of the greatest barriers to communication is our tendency to form instant judgments about what students say. It is especially important with students not to make premature assessments until you have heard the whole story.

13. **Be a patient listener.** Give the student time to talk about everything that's on their minds (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 142).

14. **Don't practice egospeak.** This habit has been described as “the art of boosting our own ego by speaking only about what we want to talk about without caring about what anybody else wants to talk about”. Don't be so busy thinking of what you want to say that you don't concentrate on what the student is saying (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 142-143).

15. **Be aware that your posture affects your listening.** When you slump, it's unlikely that you're in a position to actively listen (think about what happens at home when you slump down in a chair and try to read -- you probably end up daydreaming or reading until you fall asleep). When you need to concentrate, be relaxed but shift into your version of first gear - feet on floor, sitting up straight, looking directly at the speaker in order to pick up nonverbal cues (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 144).
Asking Questions

Your responses to students frequently depend on getting enough information from them. Sometimes, however, a student may not give you complete information. When this happens, the most appropriate response is to ask a question (Verderber, p. 150).

Sometimes you will question a student

- **to get important details**
  - ex. What are you thinking of majoring in?

- **to clarify the use of a term**
  - ex. What do you mean when you say you're doing okay in your classes?

- **to bring out feelings**
  - ex. How do you feel about your “D” in math?

(Verderber, p. 150)

Guidelines for Questioning

For your questions to succeed, they must be perceived by the student as honest efforts on your part to discover information that will help you understand what is being said. If the student thinks your questions are actual or veiled attacks, you will be doing more harm than good (Verderber, p. 150).

To lessen the likelihood that your questions will cause the student to become defensive, use the following guidelines:

- **Think about the motivation for your question.** If you are trying to get information to be more helpful, then continue. If you have some other reason, another type of response may be more appropriate. If you are just being nosy, you might need to curb your urge to question. If you are trying to make the student look bad, don’t do it at all.

- **Think about what you need to know.** More details? How a word is used or defined? How the student feels?

- **Phrase the question objectively.** Questions that seem deliberately designed to undermine or attack someone rarely result in increased understanding.

- **Speak with a sincere tone of voice.** Don’t use a tone that could be sarcastic, cutting, superior or judgmental.

(Verderber, p. 150-51)

The following is an example of the difference between an empathetic question and an attacking question:

Student:  “My professor gave me a ‘D’ on my paper again.”

You (Empathetic):   “Did he tell you why?”

You (Inappropriate): “Why didn't you do the work the way you should have?”
Types of Questions

Questions fall into several broad categories. The type of question you use with a particular student at a particular point in a conference may help or hinder the discussion.

Open Questions
Open questions are broad based and give the student free reign to express their own ideas, thoughts and preferences (ex. “What do you think about your first term at UAB?” “What can I do for you today?”, “What's up?”). This type of question allows the student a wide range of latitude in answering and encourages them to talk (Verderber, p. 170; Monroe and Ehninger, p. 61; Bradley, p. 396-397). Keep in mind the following when using this type of question:

• Open-ended questions are generally good for beginning a conference and serve as excellent conversation starters.

• Open-ended questions let the student identify for you what they need, allowing for freedom of response.

• Open questions give the student an opportunity for detailed responses. As a result, the student talks more and is an active participant in the conference. In addition, by "talking it out" with a detailed answer, they may discover options on their own.

• Answers to these types of questions are time consuming, and, in a conference with a set time limit, may restrict the number of questions you can ask.

• Open-ended questions provide you with little control over the conference and it is possible for your meeting with the student to lose direction.

Closed Questions
Closed questions limit the answers available to the student by calling for “yes” or “no” answers or answers using only a few words (ex. "Are you going to be a full time student?" "What did you make on your last history test?") They are used to obtain specific facts (Verderber, p. 170; Monroe and Ehninger, p. 40, 61; Bradley, p. 397; Midstate, p. 5.265). Keep the following in mind about closed questions:

• Closed questions are best used as follow-up questions in order to direct conversation to specific areas.

• This type of question lets you control the conference.

• Closed questions only take a short amount of time, enabling you to ask a number of questions in a relatively short period of time.
Because the answers are so brief, closed questions won’t tell you why a student gave a certain response. Closed questions yield little voluntary information and can obscure a student's feelings about a subject.

Closed questions sometimes polarize a student's options, forcing a choice between equally desirable or undesirable options.

Closed questions may stop the conversation, and decrease student participation in the conference.

Neutral Questions
Neutral questions are those that are objective and do not suggest an approved answer. The student is free to give an answer without any direction from you (ex. "What do you think about UAB?" "Are you happy with your decision to major in business?") (Verderber, p. 170-71; Bradley, p. 398). Keep in mind that:

- Neutral questions are good for gathering information.
- Because the wording of the question does not give the student any indication of how the question should be answered, you will probably get answers that more accurately reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the student.
- Because it is neutral, this type of question does not adversely affect your credibility.

Leading Questions
Leading questions suggest an expected or desired answer. This type of question answers itself (ex. "You do like UAB, don’t you?" "You are, of course, happy in pre-med, right?") (Verderber, p. 170-71; Monroe and Ehninger, p. 61). Remember that:

- Leading questions are phrased in a way that suggests the answer. In addition, nonverbal cues may also suggest an answer, turning a neutrally worded question into a leading one.
- This type of question can lead to false answers if students tell you what they think you want to hear.
- Leading questions lower your credibility. When a student recognizes a leading question, they may perceive you as either devious or unable to phrase questions properly and conclude you are either untrustworthy or incompetent.
- These questions sometimes make students defensive if they disagree with the answer you have suggested in the question.
- Leading questions are inappropriate in most situations.
Loaded Questions
Loaded questions use emotionally charged words or assume the validity of an assumption (example - “What do you think about having a worthless major like ... ?”, “Since you’re an economics major, what do you know about the president’s liberal policies?”) (Bradley, p. 398). Like leading questions, loaded questions are inappropriate.

Probing or Secondary Questions
Sometimes a student will answer a question in a way that calls for further questions on the same topic. Called secondary questions, these questions probe for additional information. Secondary questions are designed to get students to expand or clarify an idea they have already mentioned (ex. "Why don't you tell me more about why you're thinking of physical therapy?" "Why do you want to take classes at Samford this summer when you'll be in town?") (Bradley, p. 399; Midstate, p. 5.265). These follow-up questions can be used in several ways:

- To request information. You might need to see how a student defines a word or you might need a more detailed explanation of something the student said.
- To point out contradictions.
- To reiterate a question, if for some reason the student fails to answer a question you have asked.

(Bradley, p. 399-400; Midstate, p. 5.265)

Probing questions may be nondirective responses ("uh-huh", "I see"), reflective (repeating the last statement the student has said), or summary questions (Bradley, p. 399-400).

Third Party Opinion Questions
These indirect questions relate how others think or feel about a subject and then ask the student their reactions to the same subject (e.g. “First term freshmen sometimes have a tough time their first term. How are you adjusting to all this?”) (Midstate, p. 5.265).
Decision Making and Advising

Decision-making is at the heart of advising. Students frequently meet with you because they need to make a decision about, among other things, what courses to take next term, what their major should be and whether they should drop a course (Ohio St, p. 33).

Your role is to help students learn the decision making process and to help them develop the skills necessary to make good decisions. And because some of your students will be experienced and skilled at making decisions while others will have no exposure to decision making at all, you will have to advise students differently based on their developmental level (Ohio St, p. 33, 36).

Styles of Decision Making

Students who come to you for help in making a decision may have one of three approaches:

Rational decision makers

- are advanced in the decision-making process
- are responsive to testing and reading about occupations
- anticipate deadlines for decisions
- come to you to plan.

Intuitive decision makers

- are internally focused
- are interested in whether the decision feels right
- are responsive to experiential approaches.

Dependent decision makers

- see you as the expert who knows the right answer
- want advice and direct suggestions along with information
- are influenced (both positively and negatively) by what significant others think they should do.

(Ohio St, p. 36, from Harren)

It is particularly important to note that students in the dependent style want you to make decisions for them. Many lack the skills necessary to make decisions since most important decisions have been made for them by other people, including their parents. They also generally lack the ability to accept responsibility for any decisions they do make (Ohio St, p. 33).
Decision Making Models

A variety of models exist to explain the steps in the decision making process. One is presented here to help you in working with students who need to develop decision-making skills. You will want to adapt it depending on the particular student involved.

Systematic Decision Making Model

Developed by Gelatt in 1962, this model has a sequential process and is cyclical since once a decision is made, it may lead to entering the sequence again.

1. Define the problem
   ♦ State the real problem, not the surface one
   ♦ State the problem in specific terms
   ♦ State the problem as a question

2. State goals clearly

3. Collect information
   ♦ What information is necessary?
   ♦ Where can it be found?
   ♦ Is it relevant to the problem?

4. List alternative solutions
   ♦ Which solutions are safe? Risky?
   ♦ Do they match personal values and beliefs?
   ♦ What are the consequences of each solution?

5. Choose one alternative
   ♦ Is it consistent with goals in step 2?

6. Act on choice
   ♦ How can choice be implemented?
   ♦ What action can be taken now?
   ♦ What action needs to be taken later?

7. Review choice periodically

(Ohio St, p. 33-34)
Application of Model for Decisions About Major
The University of Utah and The University of Nebraska have adapted a systematic model of decision making to the college student's decision about a major:

1. **Recognize and define the decision that needs to be made and when it must be made.**
   "I need to decide on a major within a year."

2. **Gather all available information.**
   "I can get information by reading the catalog, taking an exploratory class, visiting the Career Resource Center, talking to my advisor”, etc.

3. **Develop a list of alternatives.**
   "My top three choices are sociology, education and communication arts.”

4. **Examine the consequences of each alternative by assessing the risks and counting the costs.**
   "Sociology requires statistics; education would take two extra terms; communication arts requires foreign language."

5. **Make an initial decision.**
   "Communication arts is really where I have the most interest."

6. **Develop and implement a plan.**
   "I have seen the advisor in Arts and Humanities and received a checklist for communication arts. I have planned my schedule of classes for each term and can graduate by June 2002."

7. **Evaluate the success of the plan.**
   "It has now been two terms since I made the decision. I have enjoyed the classes in communication arts and am making good grades in them."

8. **Proceed with the plan, or re-evaluate.**
   "Because things are going so well I am continuing with communication arts."

(Act. p. 5.153-5.155)

Like the first model, students may "circle back" at any point in the process to any earlier point. Thus a student who cannot, for example, examine the consequences of the alternatives (step 4), may need to return to step 2 and gather additional information.
Group Advising

The academic year presents numerous opportunities for group advising sessions, including orientation advising and registration advising. A model for group advising is outlined below which meets the following goals:

- To advise large numbers of students during peak times of the term without long waits for appointments;
- To decrease the stress of seeing student after student and repeating exactly the same information over and over;
- To increase student responsibility for choices;
- To provide individual attention while maintaining the group setting; and
- To provide developmental advising.

Model for Group Advising

Group advising sessions should include the following components:

1. **Attention Getting Device**
   - Purpose is to immediately get your students interested in what is about to occur.
   - Possibilities include jokes, stories, startling statistics, personal revelations, exercises.
   - Students should be given something to do that is fun and challenging while tying into your theme.

2. **Preview**
   - Purpose is to inform students of what will happen in session.
   - Stick to your agenda but understand that students may have different purposes from you. (If they have an immediate or serious problem you may need to schedule an individual appointment with them).

3. **Teaching/Learning Component**
   - Purpose is to discuss with your students anything you feel they need to know. Examples of topics include explanation of the Core, study skills improvement, specific GPA policies for your School, the decision making process.
   - Interact with the students and avoid lecturing. Get them involved in making suggestions and developing the ideas you want to address. Incorporate their comments into any information you give them. Encourage them to think, to participate, and to share.
♦ Use handouts to improve recall of the session and to encourage further thought.

4. **Personalized Assessment**

♦ Purpose is to provide any personalized and individualized information needed to accomplish your purpose. Examples include individualized curriculum checksheets and evaluations of where the student's course work fits in; grade point deficiency calculations. Make sure to keep a copy of anything you want them to take home.

♦ Use attention getting flags, colored paper, colored pens to get student's attention to those places on their assessment that need immediate attention. Example: circling in red a student's GPA that is facing suspension; notes on color paper asking them to see you ASAP.

5. **Student Response**

♦ Purpose is to give all students an opportunity to clarify their understanding of what has been discussed.

♦ May be verbal or written comments or questions.

6. **Individualized Feedback/Discussion/Resolution**

♦ Purpose is to allow you to spend some time one-on-one with each student.

♦ Let each student tell you if anything needs to be clarified and make sure they understand your message.

♦ Remember the Privacy Act - anything you feel would embarrass a student in front of others in the group (i.e., poor grades) should be written down in note form on their assessment.

7. **Student Action Plan**

♦ Purpose is to let students decide what they are willing to do next. If unwilling to do anything, the student understands the consequences and knows that you will not bail them out.

♦ Make sure to hold the student accountable.

♦ Set a time limit for completion of plan and be willing to help a student complete it. Make sure the plan is the student's plan and not your plan for the student.

♦ Plan should be written. Keep a copy for yourself and give one to the student.
Tips on Conducting a Group Advising Session

Before starting groups

- Limit the number of students who can attend each group.
- Decide when you will offer group sessions.
- Set a time limit for each session.
- Allow yourself time before each group to prepare and after each group to evaluate.
- Set your goals and know what you want to accomplish.
- Make sure students know this will be a group session.
- Decide whether or not students will have to schedule sessions or can just walk in.

During a group

- Start on time. Let late comers catch up -- don't back up and start over. You may want to reschedule students more than 10 minutes late.
- Get everyone to speak (even if in unison).
- Be organized; have structure to your presentation.
- Make liberal use of handouts. Since this is not a class, students will probably not take notes.
- Use examples.
- Remember that every group is different and will have its own personality. Some participate more; some will be excited; some won't care.
- Remember that your energy and enthusiasm sets the tone for the group.
- Remember that diversity within the group is normal and provides students (and you) with different perspectives.
- Make sure your sessions are group advising sessions, not individual conferences done in a group setting.

After groups are over

- Make notes on the students' comment sheets if appropriate.
- Evaluate and revise your format to improve your effectiveness.
Two IMPORTANT Communication Reminders

Attention spans are short so keep the group interested through interaction, questions and participation (Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin, p. 135).

Two or more people, listening to the same message, may actually hear different things. There is no such thing as uniform comprehension. Physiological factors, social roles, cultural background, personal interests and needs all shape and distort the raw data people hear into uniquely different messages (Adler & Rodman, p. 76). It is therefore especially important that you include time to check each student's understanding of what has been said individually.
Conference Sequence

Although every student and every conference is different, a typical advising conference follows this sequence:

1. Opening of interview
   ♦ Begins with a question or lead (“How can I help you today?” etc.).
   ♦ Have student's folder out so relevant information is readily available.
   ♦ Convey openness, interest and attention through eye contact, body position, etc.

2. Identification of reason for conference
   ♦ Ask student to state the problem or issues, helping them articulate it if needed.
   ♦ Student states all relevant facts, giving you as much information as needed.
   ♦ Discern if the problem or issue the student presents is different from the real problem or issue.
   ♦ Restate the problem or issue in your own words, giving them a chance to clarify, elaborate or correct your interpretation.

3. Identification of possible solutions or options
   ♦ Ask student for solution or options, if not already apparent.
   ♦ Ask what, how, when, who will solve problem and what resources are needed.
   ♦ Discuss implications of solutions if two or more are identified.

4. Action on solution or option
   ♦ What specific steps need to be taken? Are steps procedural or is information referral needed?
   ♦ In what order do steps need to be taken?
   ♦ What time frame is required?
   ♦ What follow-up is needed by both you and the student?

5. Summary of conference
   ♦ Ask if there is anything else that needs to be discussed.
   ♦ Encourage future contact and make a definite appointment if referrals or assignments have been made.
   ♦ Write dated notes in student's folder about what took place (e.g. Dropped Math 105 - received 46 on first test; recommended retake MA 102 next term since 3rd attempt at MA 105; discussed _____ major; referred to _________ for more information).

(Ohio St., p. 27)
Schedule Planning

One of the most frequent reasons for students to make advising appointments is to plan their schedule of classes for the next term. Keep the following in mind when making recommendations for course and schedule planning.

- **Keep the student's previous academic record in mind.** Look also at placement tests, ACT scores, high school records.

- **Stick to the course numbering system** when feasible. Generally speaking, freshmen should take 100 level courses, sophomores 200 level, juniors 300 level, seniors 400 level.

- **Mention the drop/add process to students,** emphasizing deadlines for making changes; and the possible consequences of dropping below eight semester hours (full time load).

- **Suggest a balanced schedule,** combining analytical, writing, activity, reading and lecture courses.

- **Encourage students to register as early as possible,** according to their assigned time as listed in the class schedule. This maximizes class selection success while minimizing both the student's and your frustration.

- **Make sure the student understands how the courses they have selected do or do not meet degree requirements.** One way to do this is to supply the student with a copy of a transcript evaluation for their degree program.

- **Have students list not only preferred courses but also alternate times and classes** so they will know what to do if a class is closed.

- **Remind students to get any required signatures** on their registration form.

- **Check course prerequisites as listed in the catalog.** Although students think they can sometimes ignore these (or take prerequisites concurrently with the course), makes it clear that these are there to improve their performance.

- **If you don't know what a course is about, how the instructor tests or anything else the student asks about a particular course, find out or have the student contact the department or instructor.**

- **Encourage students not to take terms off between math courses** since these courses build on each other and success is dependent on information from previous courses (Weber St., p. 2-8).
• Determine the student's out-of-class obligations or activities before choosing how many classes to take. Remember that some students have restrictions when they are admitted (i.e., conditionally admitted freshman, students admitted through the suspension appeals committee). On the other hand, some have to have a minimum number of hours to receive financial aid or for other important reasons. Finally, pay particular attention to the fact that studies show it is difficult to work full time and attend school full time. For further information about the time demands of each course, see the section on working students (Weber St, p. 2-8, 4-9; Bunker Hill, p. 16).

• Determine the student's goals before setting up a schedule. Is the student thinking of transferring or changing majors? If so, do they know these requirements?

• If a student insists on scheduling a course against your advice, try to explain why you feel it is not a good idea. If the student still insists, make sure to note that the action is against your better judgment (Bunker Hill, p. 16).
About Referrals

Throughout an advising session, you constantly give feedback to students through the information you give them and the manner in which you relay that information. It is sometimes difficult, however, to address every student problem in a manner that is thorough and accurate. It is in those cases that students need to receive feedback, the fourth component of the communication model, from other campus resources. This section addresses the specifics of referrals, including how, where and when to refer.
About Referrals

Steps in Referring Students

Sometimes a student will be faced with a need that can best be met through another campus office. They may need information or assistance, which falls outside your domain, or be eligible for a particular program. To help students take advantage of all available campus resources, use these steps:

**Step 1. Referral Decision**

Ability to determine whether or not a referral should be made

- Determine the problem(s)
- Determine if you can help and/or are qualified to offer the assistance needed
- Determine if a referral is needed
- Determine possible referral agencies or persons

**Step 2. Referral Process**

Ability to professionally refer student to the proper person or agency for assistance

- Inform the student of need for referral
- Take the emotional and psychological reaction to referral into account
- Explain reasons for referral and let student evaluate possible sources of help and assist in the selection of specific person or agency
- Explain what services are available from the resource person or agency you recommend
- Reassure student about capability and qualifications of resource
- Give student the name of a contact person to ask for (if possible) and give directions to the office if necessary
- Help the student make an appointment with the resource person or agency
- If necessary, discuss any need for transfer of data and obtain consent for the transfer
- Provide all necessary facts to get them to referral source
- Help student formulate questions to ask or approaches to take
- Provide the resource person or agency with any information essential for helping the student
ABOUT REFERRALS

Step 3. Follow Up
Ability to evaluate appropriateness and effectiveness of referral

- Determine if appointment was kept
- Discuss with the student their evaluation of the referral
- Determine if the appropriate source of help was utilized

(ACT, p. 5.103-104, from University of North Florida; Houston Baptist, p. 52.53)
When to Refer Students

- **When they ask for a referral.** Before doing this make sure you have a full understanding of the student's problem so you know where the best referral is. It is also a good idea to assess the urgency of the need.

- **When a student has a problem or requests information, which is outside your range of knowledge.** Even though this is a reason for referral, don't completely ignore personal or social concerns that the student expresses (Ohio St, p. 29).

- **When a student says they are contemplating suicide.** While there are wide differences in the seriousness of suicidal thoughts, anytime a student is thinking of it enough to mention it to you means that it requires immediate attention. Although it is important for you to help deal with immediate feelings, a threat to self or others ethically requires strong intervention. In order to assess the severity of suicidal thoughts, the counselor from the Wellness Center should be contacted. Offer to walk with the student to the Center and report such conversations to the counselor.

- **When you feel you have been unable to help a student who needs help.** None of us can help everyone we try to help. When you feel you haven't been helpful, try to be honest with the student and refer them to someone who you think can.

- **When you cannot be objective.** There are many things that can interfere with your ability to be a nonjudgmental listener -- the student is a friend, neighbor or relative; you know the person the student is talking about; you are identifying too closely with the student's problem.

- **When the student is hesitant to discuss a problem with you.** Whenever you feel a student may not be comfortable talking to you, you should refer them elsewhere.

- **When a student has physical symptoms.** Headaches, dizziness, stomach pains or insomnia might be physical manifestations of psychological states. Although this is certainly not always true, it might be in the student's best interest to refer them to a professional.

(Houston Baptist, p. 48-49)
Guidelines for Referrals

- I know enough about the student's problem to refer them to the office that can help them the most.

- I have dealt with any of the student's feelings (objections, fears) about the referral.

- I have gone slowly and, unless it is an emergency, let the student know they have a choice to accept or refuse the referral.

- I have been very specific in the referral (name of office, location, and name of individual to contact, telephone number).

- I have seen if the student needs help in the referral while letting them do as much for themselves as possible.

- I have followed-up with the student, even if they did not accept my referral.

- I make sure students know that I am referring them because I care and because I feel the office I am sending them to can really help them.

(Houston Baptist, p. 50-51)
Counseling Referrals

The following signs may indicate that a student could benefit from a referral to the counselor in the Wellness Center. Taken alone, these may not suggest a problem. If behaviors persist, are combined or are intense then immediate intervention may be required.

**Unusual Behavior**
- Withdrawal from usual social interaction
- Seclusion and unwillingness to communicate
- Persistent antisocial behavior including lying, stealing, or other grossly deviant acts
- Lack of social skills or deteriorating personal hygiene
- Inability to sleep; excessive sleeping
- Loss of appetite; excessive appetite
- Unexplained crying or anger
- Excessively increased activity (ex. ceaseless talking, extreme restlessness)
- Repeated class absences
- Unusual irritability
- Thought disorders (ex. conversation doesn't make sense)
- Suspiciousness; irrational feelings of persecution
- Irrational worrying or expressing fear

**Traumatic Changes in Interpersonal Relationships**
- Death of a family member or close friend
- Difficulties with marriage or family relationships
- Dating difficulties
- Sexual abuse (ex. rape, incest, harassment)
- Terminal or chronic illness of family member
ABOUT REFERRALS

Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Any indications of excessive drinking or drug abuse, including impaired thinking
- Severe drug reaction, including bizarre behavior, unexplained blackouts, memory lapses
- Being a child of an alcoholic or drug dependent parent

Academic Problems
- Dramatic drop in GPA
- Deficient reading speed or comprehension
- Poor study habits
- Incapacitating test anxiety
- Sudden changes in academic performance
- Lack of class attendance

Career Choice Problems
- Dissatisfaction with major
- Unrealistic career goals
- Confusion about interests, abilities, values
- Chronic indecisiveness or choice conflict
- Uncertainty of career alternatives

(Houston Baptist, p. 46-48)
Helping Students in Immediate Crisis

You should exercise caution in helping students with personal crisis that are uncomfortable or unfamiliar to you (Bunker Hill, p. 46). The most important thing to remember is that students who are having serious personal problems should be referred to a counselor (MATC, p. 37).

Emergencies that require IMMEDIATE attention include:

- suicide threats
- threats to harm someone else
- claims of being an abused spouse
- drug or alcohol problems
- legal problems
- lack of money for food, rent or other necessities
- psychological problems
- intent to drop out
- immediate need for financial aid or employment

Handling students in crisis means:

- remaining non-judgmental
- avoiding telling the student what to do
- being open, sensitive and honest
- showing genuine concern
- referral to appropriate departments

(MATC, p. 38-39)
ABOUT REFERRALS

CRISIS REFERRALS
When referring these students:

- **Make these referrals privately.** Referrals made in the presence of others can often make the student embarrassed or angry.

- **Be clear about the reason for referral.** Be specific about why you are referring, noting the behaviors that have made you concerned. Avoid making generalizations or attributing anything negative to the individual's personality.

- **If possible, accompany the student to the referral office.** This sometimes decreases anxiety when a serious personal issue is involved.

- **Assure the student of confidentiality in counseling.**

- **Contact the other office involved to let the staff know that you have referred a student and why.**

- **Do not require a student to seek counseling.** Unless you feel the student is a threat to themselves or others, the student should have a choice to accept or refuse counseling.

- **Never trick or deceive the student into going in for counseling.** If the student is skeptical or reluctant, express your acceptance of their feelings so that they feel free to reject the referral without rejecting you. Give the student room by suggesting that perhaps you can talk about referral later if the student wants to think about it. If the student is emphatic about not going, respect their decision but leave the situation open for reconsideration. Do not rush the student -- unless it is a matter of clear urgency, go slowly.

(Bunker Hill, p. 45; Houston Baptist, p. 49-50)
Student Responsibility in Referrals

Like other parts of the advising process, responsibility for the success of a referral is dependent on both you and the student. While you have responsibilities to assess the problem, determine the need for referral and locate the appropriate campus resource, a referral cannot be successful unless the student is an active participant.

Student responsibilities include:

- understanding the reason for referral
- knowing where to go and who to contact
- preparing relevant and specific questions or tasks to complete
- knowing when and how to give you feedback.

(Ohio St, p. 48)

The most important student responsibility in referrals is, of course, following through and going to the office to which they have been referred.
Legal Issues Regarding Academic Advising: An Update

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We live in a very litigious society today which makes it imperative that all educators keep abreast of the current legal parameters within which they may make decisions and take actions. Academic advisors are not exempt from this necessity. Frequent updating of legal parameters is a must for academic advisors since they are on the “front line” of the college or university in dealing with students. It is a critical position, and the success or failure of the student’s education and growth is influenced greatly by the advising function. In today’s litigious atmosphere, the advising function is more critical than ever.

The legal relationship between students and the public institution is a constitutional one. Students are citizens and do not yield their rights when they enter the campus gates. The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the state from depriving its citizens of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. It also mandates that states treat people equally under the law. Since the public college or university is an extension of the state, the institution must abide by constitutional parameters.

In a private institution, however, the legal relationship between the student and the college or university is contractual, because the Constitution has no prohibition against private action. If the private institution becomes entwined with the state to a great degree, such as involvement with the governance of the institution or a contractual relationship with the state (there are also many other factors to be considered such as receipt of public funds, tax exemptions, etc.) it may be declared to be engaged in “state action” which would trigger constitutional guarantees for its students. However, it is rare that private institutions are found to be engaged in “state action.”

In the area of academic affairs, the legal relationship is contractual. This is true in both the public and the private college or university.

Academic advising occurs under the umbrella of academic affairs. The courts have always hesitated to enter the academic arena and substitute their judgments for that of the academician. In doing so, they have recognized the academic freedom which protects academic decisions, including advising decisions. They have recognized also that their repeated presence in

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the academic community could possibly cause deterioration in an otherwise beneficial student-faculty relationship. Thus, if academicians do not abuse their discretion in dealing with students, they need not fear judicial intervention. The courts will intervene, however, if evidence exists of arbitrary or negligent treatment of students or a denial of their protected rights. The increasing number of court decisions dealing with classroom and academic matters attests to the growing judicial sensitivity to students' rights in academic affairs. The advisors' job falls within this academic affairs arena, and they must understand the legal issues involving such major areas as:

1. the contractual relationship between student and institution;
2. the statutory relationships;
3. the guidelines governing privacy of student records;
4. the concept of privileged communications;
5. the academic due process; and
6. the need for grievance procedures.

Contractual Relationship

It was stated above that in academic affairs a contractual relationship exists between the student and the institution. The basic provisions of the college catalog, recruiting brochures, various bulletins, and the student handbook become part of the contract. The institution sets forth certain requirements for passing courses and for successful completion of programs and subsequent graduation. If students fail to meet the required standards they can be penalized through such actions as dismissal, suspension, or failure to graduate on schedule; if the institution fails to respect its own regulations, then the student may seek judicial relief.

An institution may create certain contractual obligations through statements in its publications. Under normal circumstances the requirements outlined in the catalog in effect when the student enters the institution are controlling until the student graduates. However, the institution may make modifications and some changes if conditions warrant. In general, the greater the change, the less sympathy the courts will have for the institution in any case alleging a breach of contract. An institution may allow a student the option of meeting the requirements of the catalog in effect at the time of admission or to adhere to the new requirements.

Institutions should not promise more than they are prepared to actually give to the student. There are court cases where students have been awarded monetary damages where the institution violated the contract with the student by not affording certain promised services such as job placements, or proper preparation for finding a job.

Advisor's obligations and responsibilities usually appear in an advisor's handbook and often in publications readily available to the student. An increasing emphasis on quality advising to enhance retention brings added responsibilities to the advisor. More and more advisors not only are expected to understand such things as scheduling and registration procedures and degree and program requirements, but also they may be expected to function as a referral service or possibly as career counselors. Thus, if institutions promise such services from their advising system, they should ensure that their advisors can deliver these services.
Legal Issues Regarding Academic Advising

Where an advisor did not, or could not, perform his contractual obligation, their liability could be present. Therefore, institutions should be conscious of an advisor’s obligations which might be created by unequivocal statements regarding advisor’s responsibilities.

Most institutions’ catalogs state that the ultimate responsibility for knowing degree requirements rests with the student. This type of statement normally would protect advisors if they commit an advising error. Generally, the advisor is not going to be held personally liable for erroneous advising in the absence of gross negligence, irresponsible behavior, or arbitrary or capricious treatment of the student. Advisors should keep notes of their discussions with students during advising sessions. An accurate record of advising sessions would help solve any disputes over the content of previous advising and also serve as a legitimate protection against claims of erroneous advising.

Statutory Relationship

In addition to the contractual relationship between the student and the institution, a statutory relationship is also created by virtue of laws passed by Congress or the state legislature. These laws create statutory rights. These rights created by Congress are applicable to students enrolled in any institution, public or private, which is subject to the legislation—usually by the receipt of federal funds. The primary statutory rights of college and university students are those found in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex while Section 504 parallels Title IX and guarantees that no handicapped individual will be discriminated against on the basis of his or her handicap. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act warrants special treatment and is discussed in the following section.

The Buckley Amendment: Advisor’s Responsibility and Students’ Rights to Privacy

Since advisors maintain educational records, records of advisee’s grades and other academic information) they must understand the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, commonly referred to as The Buckley Amendment. Basically, this act provides students with access to information placed in their official files, and the advising file is an official file. The act ensures that only school officials with a legitimate educational interest may see the student’s file, and the student’s permission must be obtained before any other party may have access to the file. Thus, advisors, upon request, must allow students access to their advising file, but may exclude their notes of access to personal notes the advisor may have made during the advising sessions. Under this Act the note constitute records made by educational personnel and kept solely in their possession. Advisors may allow someone who temporarily performs their advising duty to see the notes; if the advisor is to be replaced permanently, however, she/he should remove any personal notes from the student’s file before transferring the file to the replacement.

Under the legislation, the student has the right to an informal hearing regarding material in her/his record. If, at this hearing, the student does not receive satisfaction then she/he may insert explanatory material in the file. The Act specifically denies a student the right to a hearing regarding grades received, but the student may challenge the accuracy of transferring grades to the student’s record.

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Information in the file may be sent to parity of financially dependent students without their written consent. The registrar's office usually maintains information regarding a student's status as a financial dependent. Institutional policy, however, will determine whether or not information must be sent to parents without the student's consent.

According to the Buckley Amendment, a record also must be kept of requests received from school officials to obtain information from the student's file. The record should not only identify the official making the request, but also the official's legitimate educational reasons for requesting the information. This record should remain in the student's file. Each institution is individually responsible for determining which parties qualify as "school officials" and what constitutes a "legitimate educational interest." Advisors should familiarize themselves with their institution's policy governing this matter, as well as other institutional policies regarding implementation of the Buckley Amendment.

Privileged Communications

Although the law recognizes the student's right to privacy of her/his educational records, it also recognizes the advisor's right to privileged communications. For example, in an effort to help a student, advisors can discuss confidential information regarding that student with other appropriate individuals. The courts generally will respect the right to such communications and will not hold the advisor liable for statements considered as privileged communications. This right is not an absolute one, and advisors must exercise good judgment in making confidential statements. To determine the appropriateness of confidential discussions, an advisor should simply ask: "Would such a discussion serve the student's best interest?"

At times, students will come to advisors with personal problems; normally these problems should remain confidential. In some instances, however, a student may tell the advisor of certain intentions that would prove harmful to the student or possibly to others, such as the intention to commit suicide or the desire to harm another person. Although the statements are made in confidence, an obligation rests with the advisor to disclose such information to an appropriate party, such as parents, an intended victim, a school psychologist, or police.

Academic Due Process*

The courts have mandated that students receive due process guarantees of notice and hearing in disciplinary cases, but students with grievances concerning academic affairs, such as situations involving erroneous advising, disputed grades, or alleged arbitrary course requirements, generally find themselves without absolute due process guarantees. But remember that the specific facts of a particular situation may be sufficient to require that due process be afforded the aggrieved student.

*A course of legal proceedings established by a legal system to protect the rights and liberties of an individual. It gives a person the right to be heard in a court of law.

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It is imperative that advisors understand and keep abreast of the basic legal parameters regarding the student/institutional relationship and the advising function. Figure 1 and Figure 2 present two most valuable sources of current legal information appropriate for academic advisors. Every advisor should have ready access to these publications. Each advising center or group should have them available for reference and for assistance in shaping policies involving advising.

Advisors need not be attorneys but they must be able to recognize the basic rights of students and have some understanding of the legal boundaries which the courts have outlined in dealing with student-institutional relationships. When an advisor is in doubt, the institution's attorney or some other appropriate authority should be contacted.

Finally, advisors should always act as reasonable, prudent persons at all times and act in the best interest of the student. By knowing the current legal parameters and by practicing the "Golden Rule," advisors will create and maintain those policies and practices which respect the worth and dignity of each person. By doing so, they will help create a better climate for reducing the incentives for legalism and respecting the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of all.

The federal courts are increasingly viewing alleged cheating and plagiarism in the same light as disciplinary situations and are beginning to require that students be afforded due process in these cases. This is so because alleged cheating and plagiarism reflects upon the student's good name, reputation, and integrity. Therefore, the student has a liberty interest, in addition to a possible property interest, which would trigger due process guarantees.

Courts generally will respect the institution's procedures for handling academic affairs cases, and their decisions resolving these cases. As previously indicated, the courts will intervene in cases involving seemingly arbitrary or capricious treatment of a student.

The voluntary application of the spirit and principles of due process to academic affairs can reduce the incentives for legalism and reliance upon the courts by students when they feel aggrieved. With clearly-defined grievance procedures in place, courts will decline to intervene until a student exhausts this administrative remedy. Individual departments or divisions of the institution should outline procedures that students must follow in registering grievances resulting from erroneous advising or any other action taken by the advisor. The following suggested procedures should not be construed as specific prescriptions to cover every case, but rather as a guideline:

1. Institutions should define clearly and publish the responsibilities of advisors and students in the advisor-advisee relationship.

2. Information the student is expected to know, such as academic requirements for continuation and graduation, should be clearly specified and publicized.

3. A well-documented and orderly procedure of appeal should be established and promulgated. A committee should be appointed in each department or division, or one committee for the entire institution if appropriate, which would hear complaints by students against advisors for alleged advising errors or negligent and irresponsible advising. The individual or advisor against whom the allegations have been made should receive all due process rights in defending her/his actions.

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Implementation and promulgation of these recommendations would not open a Pandora’s box with a proliferation of student complaints against advisors. Rather, advisors would develop and maintain a responsible attitude toward students, and students would understand more clearly their responsibilities in the advising process. The channeling of complaints through an appointed committee would formalize a fair and reasonable procedure which does not exist on many campuses today.

Arrival of consumerism to the campus and the lowered age of majority have probably been major factors in the increase of cases involving academic affairs. Consumerism on campus today considers whether or not an institution delivers to the student the product it claims in its various publications, as well as in oral presentations. As legal adults, students must accept more responsibility for their actions on campus and thus also may have a greater inclination to press charges against the institution when they believe they have received arbitrary or capricious treatment. This does not mean that all students might file a court suit when they reach the age of majority, but since they must accept the responsibilities of that status they will most likely be more zealous of their rights. With these prevailing conditions and the fact that quality advising is fast becoming a criterion for promotion, tenure, and salary increases, advisors should seek to understand the legal issues related to advising. This understanding will ensure a responsible attitude toward students and protect their rights as well as those of the advisor.
FEATURED ARTICLE

Academic Advising and Potential Litigation

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INTRODUCTION

It is important for the academic advisor to be aware of the legal ramifications of advising. However, the academic advisor cannot function in fear. Generally, when legal action occurs in the area of academic advising the result is either a tort claim or a contract claim. There have been instances of other actions which involve other types of legal issues such as conflict of interest, constitutional rights violations, and violation of anti-trust laws. The vast majority of legal cases in recent years focused upon academic decisions rather than upon cases involving disciplinary action or student arrest. The advisor, then, should limit advice to areas which are specifically assigned and areas in which the advisor has appropriate knowledge and background. Advice given without careful thought or in reckless disregard of its truth may result in legal action.

A tort action is a civil action independent of contracts for which the court may allow money damages. On the other hand, a contract claim is brought when an agreement which created an obligation between two or more parties is violated. Because of the cases generated in recent years, this paper will focus on these basic areas.

TORT LAW

NEGLIGENCE

Negligence is a tort that has been created due to necessity. Because of the special relationship of a person profiting knowledge, the reasonable and prudent person relies on representations made by the specialist. Often, if the trust is misplaced, an innocent person suffers. Thus, the courts have had to create a type of tort to protect the innocent.

Negligence has four basic elements. There must be a legal duty recognized by the court; this duty must be breached; the breach of this duty must be the legal cause of an injury; and the claimant must experience actual injury.

March, 1983
The major question in negligence is whether a duty exists. Duty is defined by Prosser as being the obligation which is recognized by the law which requires the actor to conform to a certain standard of conduct for the protection of others against unreasonable risks.¹

Courts have been reluctant to impose a duty except in a few extraordinary instances. The general rule is that there is no duty if there is no special relationship. Special relationships have been determined to exist in a doctor-patient relationship, a lawyer-client relationship, and in the psychiatrist-patient relationship. In very recent decisions, courts have indicated that the special relationship between teacher-student may soon be acknowledged.

It can be seen that once a special relationship is determined, a tremendous burden is created. This burden creates an extremely high margin of liability, because once a duty exists the court must examine the facts to determine if there was an injury to the claimant, and if an injury which was present was the injury due to a breach of an existing duty. In addition to an injury, the court asks if the reliance by the claimant was reasonable. The theory of negligence rests upon the reasonable, prudent person standard, that is, the court creates a fictitious person who acts with ordinary skill and care.

In a relatively large number of cases during the last decade negligence was the primary issue. A major court issue facing academic advisors today, is the question of relationship and duty. The academic advisor must know or at least be aware of the fact that because the advisor is held publicly to have special knowledge and because the advisor has access to certain information, the advisor may have a duty to a student advisee. If the advisor is not careful in gathering information or if the information is made available with disregard for truth, then the advisor may be negligent.

NONDISCLOSURE AND MISREPRESENTATION

One problem which arises regularly in the academic environment, is when an advisor who has information, remains silent or passively fails to disclose these facts. Is this grounds for claiming an injury? As a general rule, courts have not found silence to be sufficient grounds upon which to base liability. The general rule is based upon Caveren Empror or "let the buyer beware." It dates back to early English law which reflected the rather unethical business practices of the English merchant.¹

Modern cases have held that as long as one does not actively mislead another, there is no misrepresentation. Nevertheless, courts have deemed it necessary to develop some expectations. An expectation is that if one speaks at all, sufficient information must be disclosed so that the words are not misleading. One cannot, then, disclose only a part and represent it to be the whole.

²Week v. Gurney 1873, L.R. 4, H.L. 377.

March 1983
Another expectation is that the one who has the information has a fiduciary duty to the other party. Examples of such duty are: the employer-employee relationship, where special trust is placed upon the disclose, or where one holds oneself out as a professional or expert in that field and has assumed a position of authority. Most courts will find a duty of disclosure if the party has special knowledge or means of acquiring that knowledge, not openly available to the other. This is particularly true if there is reliance on the information and the information would affect the ultimate decision of the one not in possession of the information. As a result of the court's chiseling away at the general rule of disclosure, the law today appears to be that full disclosure of all material facts must be made whenever conduct demands it.1

If misrepresentation exists, then the next question follows. To whom is the representative liable? The answer depends upon the facts of the case. If the misrepresentation was intentional, then the representor is liable if the intention was to mislead or to deceive. There is greater liability if "scienter" (defendant had knowledge) can be proven. Sometimes courts may be asked to impose the doctrine of transferred intent, but they have refused to do this because of public policy. It is possible that the size of the group which may rely upon the misrepresentation will be so large that the burden of liability would far exceed the fault of the misrepresentation. Thus, the limits for liability may include the original advisee and exclude the casual observer who might overhear and who had no reason to act upon the misrepresentation. On the other hand, anyone who has reason to act upon the misrepresentation, even though it was not made to that individual personally, is included within the zone of liability.

If the speaker believes his/her own statement to be true, or the representation is made without any belief as to its truth, or the statement is made with reckless disregard of its truthfulness, the representor is merely negligent and liable only if mere is detrimental reliance on the misrepresentation. This reliance must be reasonable.

It must be remembered that the academic advisor influences a large number of persons. Memos and other statements published by academic advisors may be directed to others in addition to the intended recipient, and it is not unreasonable for them to rely on incorrect information.

When a misrepresentation is made, the significance assigned to it will be determined by the effect it would have on a reasonable and prudent person. If it is logical that one would rely on the statement or information that was misrepresented, then the court is likely to acknowledge that negligence occurred. However, if it appears to be an unreasonable reliance, then it is highly unlikely that the court will find the declarant liable.

Misrepresentation may occur merely by entering into a transaction, for example, the actions of an academic advisor may be sufficient representation though no oral disclosure was made. Once again, if the reliance by the advisee or anyone else who may reasonably be expected to rely upon the information was reasonable, the academic advisor may be liable for damages based upon negligence.


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When an ambiguous statement is made, and the advisee mistakes the meaning, negligence is present. It makes no difference that there may be two meanings, a true and false one. If the advisee makes a reasonable reliance upon the false meaning, it does not matter that the advisor intended the true meaning and that the advisor thought the advisee understood the true meaning. What matters is that misrepresentation based upon negligence occurred and the advisee was reasonable in relying upon the false meaning. Again, as in every instance of negligence, the advisee must experience an injury because of the misrepresentation.

In summary, misrepresentation is negligent behavior. It can be deliberate concealment of facts. It can be words which conceal the truth, or it can be a false denial of knowledge. Misrepresentation can be by conduct as well as oral declarations. The liability of negligent misrepresentation or nondisclosure is not necessarily confined to the advisee, but includes anyone who may reasonably be expected to rely upon the disclosed information.

DEFAAMATION

Defamation is another common tort action. Academic advisors are particularly susceptible to this action because they come into contact with sensitive and personal information on a daily basis. Defamation is composed of the separate torts of libel and slander. Libel is written communication which can harm one’s reputation, and slander is an oral statement made to injure a party’s reputation or standing in society.

Academic advisors must process and communicate information concerning an advisee’s scholastic performance and social behavior. This information may affect a student advisee’s reputation and stigmatize his/her future. The advisor is given no special relationship privileges. When ordered by the court, the advisor must disclose known facts.

On the other hand, in order to perform the duties of an advisor, there must be a confidential relationship between advisor and advisee. Thus, courts have held that a qualified privilege exists between advisory and advisee. A qualified privilege requires that the advisor make statements in good faith, without malice, based upon reasonable grounds, and in answer to an appropriate inquiry.

An advisor should not volunteer information concerning an advisee. Although truth of a statement is a defense for a defamation action, the modern trend is that the disclosure of the information must be made with good intentions and for justifiable reasons. Courts might consider the voluntary disclosure of damaging information to be malicious conduct by the discloser.

Persons employed in an academic setting are particularly susceptible to charges of libel and slander. Student information should be passed from one office to another with caution. Gossip and careless talk is not privileged information and should be avoided. Information should not be passed to prospective employers without a personal request from the advisee. As a matter of fact, in Texas, a president of a college was asked for graduation information concerning a former student. The presidents indicated that the student had not graduated and had, in fact, been dismissed from the college because he stole a typewriter.

*Hasten v Crossfield, 228 S.W. 673 (KY 1921).
The president added that the student was placed in jail. The student sued for damages claiming the statement of the college president was slanderous and untrue. The president could not prove the statement true and the court found in favor of the injured student.3

In addition to state courts demanding discretion by responsible individuals, the Federal Law also serves to protect the student. In 1974 the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act was passed, and the amendment (often referred to as the Buckley Amendment)4 establishes the standards which must be used in handling student records. The records which are protected under this act include academic records, health records, attendance data, achievement test scores and behavioral reports which are routinely handled by advisors and counselors. Those communications which are not routinely shared by counselors and advisors are probably not included in the protected file if the communications are kept by the individual advisor or counselor.5

One of the protections of this Educational Act is that student information cannot be released unless the student or the legal guardian has given consent or unless the court orders the release of information from the student’s file. School officials have access to the records if the need or interest is a legitimate educational interest. When student records are legitimately transferred or examined, the student and/or legal guardian may request to inspect and review and/or receive a copy of the records and they may request the opportunity to have a hearing to challenge the contents.6

In summary, an academic advisor who has the responsibility of interpreting highly sensitive data is particularly vulnerable to the defamation action. Courts will look closely to determine if the facts of the case show malice or bad faith by the advisor. Caution should be the key factor in disclosing confidential information since only a qualified privilege exists to protect the advisor.

CONTRACT LAW

WRITTEN CONTRACTS

Courts have been reluctant to assume jurisdiction over disputes between students and institutions of higher education. Judges have consistently stated that they do not have the necessary expertise to determine educational standards.

In the 1960s most of the actions in higher education being heard in courts centered around disciplinary dismissal or academic grade deficiencies. Courts stated that they would not enter into academic affairs unless there was a clear case the action by the university or college was arbitrary, capricious, and/or unfair to the student.7

*Tyler Commercial College v Laximore, 24 S.W.2d 361 (TX 1930).
*Education Amendments of 1974.
*University of Miami v Milam, 184 So.2d 701 (FL 1966), 216 So.2d 862 (FL 1967).

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In 1965, the courts established a standard for intervention in academic affairs. The standard established was that colleges and universities have broad discretion where academic requirements are concerned, and the administrators have the necessary information to determine the requirements necessary to attain academic success. Therefore, courts will intervene only if the college/university administrator’s decision is clearly arbitrary and capricious.

The courts held firmly to the arbitrary and capricious standard throughout the 1960s, steadfastly refusing to examine or review decisions made by administrators of colleges and universities. The court stated in University of Miami v. Millman that arbitrary was not synonymous to bad faith or good faith. Therefore, the court stated that it would be necessary to examine the facts of each case to determine if institutions of higher education acted arbitrarily and capriciously.

Another court stated that if a student charged that a college acted unfairly in an academic decision, then the student must prove that the decision was based upon arbitrary and capricious actions by the individual charged with the responsibility of making the decision.

During the 1970s, charges made by students claiming injury were no longer based entirely upon tort law, but also incorporated contract law. There were many instances where actions for the tortuous act of misrepresentation could not be proven, but the claim could be made and heard based upon contract law. Tort actions usually result in claims for money damages. Contract actions usually seek restitution and fairness to both parties.

Courts began to recognize that injustices were occurring, because students were claiming that when they entered a college or university they entered into a contract with the institution. They also claimed that the terms of the contract were stated in the institution's bulletin and student handbooks. Students were winning these cases.

Recently, a court held the following:
- that advising was an implied contract between a student and an institution.
- that terms prescribed by the institution for graduation are binding.

*Connolly v University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, 244 F. Supp. 156 (VT 1965).*

*Comstock v University of Vermont.*

*University of Miami v. Milam, p. 703.*

*Bowers v O'Reiley, 318 N.Y.2d 242 (NY 1971); Paulson v Golden Gate University, 602 F.2d 778 (CA 1979);
Jareen v Emory University, 440 F. Supp. 1906; affirmed at 579 F.2d 45 (CA 1977).*

*Heady v Larson, 339 N.Y.2d 625 (NY 1971); D'Atacco v University of Health Sciences, 357 N.E.2d 355 (II 1977);
Snedberg v Chicago Medical School, 371 N. E.2d 94 (IL 1977);
Lyon v Salve Regina College, 165 F.2d 200 (10 Cir. 1977), cert. denied 96 S.Ct. 161 (1977), 435 U.S. 971 (1977);
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Rosy Pennsylvania State University, 445 F. Supp. 147 (PA 1978);
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Kamor v Schmidt, 423 N.Y.2d 206 (NY 1979);
Wason v University of Southern Alabama College of Medicine 465 F. Supp. 720 (AL 1979);
Yakub v University of Illinois, 508 F. Supp. 848 (IL 1980);
In re Amosick University, 418 A.2d 35 (DC 1980);
Eagleson v Western New England College, 419 N.E.2d 1067 (MA 1981).*
that additional requirements may not be placed upon a student after the student completes those requirements that were outlined for the student by the proper officials.\textsuperscript{13}

However, another court held that additional requirements could be required after a student was admitted to the institution. The court said that as long as the requirements were reasonable and the student had proper notification before his program was completed, there was no arbitrary action by the university.\textsuperscript{14}

Courts have consistently held that bulletins and handbooks of an institution constitute a contractual relationship between the student and the institution. With this relationship, duties are imposed on both parties and the contract may be judicially enforced.\textsuperscript{17} As recently as 1981 a New Jersey court held that an institution must follow its own rules.\textsuperscript{18}

Although courts have determined that a contractual relationship exists between student and institution, one court said the principles of commercial contract law should not be rigidly applied, and colleges and universities should be allowed to retain broad discretionary powers in making academic decisions.\textsuperscript{19}

Courts continue to hold that institutions of higher education must not act arbitrarily and capriciously, and as long as institutional decisions appear to be made in good faith without malice the institution may retain its broad discretionary powers.\textsuperscript{20}

A Montana court held that the state breached its contract with several students when the state eliminated a course of study leaving the students with limited study, with only dubious training, and no opportunity to complete the course of study. The court determined that when the state eliminated the courses it breached an implied contract. However, the court cautioned that not every statement in the publication would become part of the contract; statements must be reasonable to be implied; and its ruling should not be so rigidly applied that the institution becomes static.\textsuperscript{21}

If the contract claim centers around academic dismissal, courts hold firmly to the general standard that arbitrary and capricious action must be proven before the student prevails.\textsuperscript{22} Courts have said that even if a bulletin is a contract, if the student does not achieve passing grades, the student can be dismissed and it will not be a breach of

\textsuperscript{13}Healy v Larson.
\textsuperscript{14}Giles v Howard University, 428 F. Supp. 603 (DC 1977).
\textsuperscript{15}Steinberg v Chicago Medical School.
\textsuperscript{17}Lyons v Sales Regus College.
\textsuperscript{18}Eder v Ayer.
\textsuperscript{19}Perini v State of Montana.
\textsuperscript{20}Wagon v Univ. of So. Alabama College of Medicine; Ayton v Bean, 436 N.Y.S.2d 731 (NY 1981).

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contract. Courts will not interfere if there is no evidence of bad faith or arbitrary action, and no stigma attaches to the student's name or reputation.

Courts have been asked to intervene when the student has been dismissed for failing to achieve adequate grades to continue in good academic standing, and also when the student claims there has not been adequate warning of his/her deficient performance. One court held that such failure to notify the student was not arbitrary and capricious action, though a valid regulation published in the institution's student handbook stated there would be proper notification to the student if academic progress was deficient. However, that court cautioned institutions to keep students advised of academic deficiencies which affect their progress toward a degree.

Another court determined that when a student was advised of academic requirements for remaining in a doctoral program, this was sufficient notice of those requirements. The courts also stated that when an institution makes extraordinary efforts and goes beyond its obligation to allow a student to remedy failures, this does not breach the contract. Generally, courts have not found academic dismissals to be arbitrary and capricious, but students must at least be advised of deficiencies.

A Washington State court was asked to intervene when a student failed to maintain an adequate grade point average in law school, and the court held that a university has no duty to warn of potential academic failure. The courts stated there was no fiduciary duty or confidential relationship between the university and the student. The relationship is contractual and when a student fails to achieve satisfactory progress, the student breaches the contract.

**ORAL CONTRACTS**

A contract is not always written. It can be oral. As a result, the advisor must be careful not to relate information or make agreements in conflict with the institution's written policies. Reliance upon oral statements can be as binding as reliance upon written policies. Yet, if there is a written policy, it appears the written policy takes precedence over the oral agreement. In one state court the judges determined that an oral agreement to award a degree, regardless of the school's regulation, could not be recognized. When such an oral agreement was made and violated, the student sought relief from the court. The student alleged arbitrary and capricious actions by the institution resulted in an erroneous

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18 Watson v. Univ. of So. Alabama School of Medicine.
decision not to award a degree. The court held that to deny the degree was not erroneous and that the institution's established regulation was controlling."

In another case the misunderstanding resulted when the assistant dean of a law school informed a student that if a brief was rewritten satisfactorily the failing grade received on the first brief would not be calculated into the student's grade point average, but when the student's grades were calculated the failing grade was included even though she rewrote the brief. The student was dismissed for academic reasons and she brought suit claiming she had been misled and that she had relied upon the assistant dean's representation. The court looked carefully at the facts of the case and ruled that the student had lost nothing by relying upon the assistant dean's assurance since she had other poor grades."

Reasonable reliance upon assurances by academic advisors and assistant deans may, in the future, result in courts granting relief. If the reliance is reasonable and results in pre-judicial actions by the institution, the courts may find that students were treated arbitrarily and capriciously. Presently, broad discretion exists if students are dismissed for academic reasons.\(^9\) It appears that if the institutional publications are silent as to requirements, then departmental documents may constitute contractual terms.\(^9\) Often, departmental documents are based upon oral assurances such as the assistant dean's in Shields.\(^9\) Thus, the courts may find that a student's reliance upon such assurances are arbitrary and relief by court intervention is the only equitable solution. The court in Lanner vs. Board of Education, said that "... in constitutional adjudication as elsewhere, equitable remedies are a special blend of what is necessary, what is fair, and what is workable."\(^10\)

AGENCY

It is important that the academic advisor understand the relationship between the student and the institution. The relationship which exists is one of contract. Within that relationship, the academic advisor is the institution's representative or agent, and the student has the right to rely upon the representations made by the academic advisor, as agent.

The advisor must adopt the legal stand of the reasonable and prudent person. The reasonable and prudent person will rely upon information communicated by an agent; therefore, it is imperative that the academic advisor transmit to the student or the student's guardian only the level of knowledge the academic advisor is trained to provide. The academic advisor should stress that the responsibility of an advisor is to advise, and the final decision lies with the student and/or the student's guardian. The advisor may make suggestions based upon knowledge or upon statements from university publications, and

\(^9\) Holloway vs. Univ. of Montana.

\(^10\) Shields vs. School of Law, Hofstra University, 431 N.Y.S.2d 60 (NY 1980).

\(^9\) Board of Curators of University of Missouri vs. Horowitz, 98 S.Ct. 948, 435 U.S. 76 (MO 1978).

\(^9\) Yankin vs University of Illinois, 508 F. Supp. 848 (IL 1980).

\(^10\) Shields vs. School of Law, Hofstra University.


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he/she has the responsibility to transmit such information to the student enabling the student to make an informed decision. The advisor does not make the final decision, the student has that responsibility.

Since the student must make decisions based upon information received from the advisor and from university publications, the student should be encouraged to read the publications carefully. It is important that the academic advisor informs each advisee of their responsibilities since in a contractual arrangement, the contract terms apply equally to both parties.

As an agent of the institution, the academic advisor has the responsibility of representing the principal (the university) in matters pertaining to academic transactions. This agency is expressed as well as implied. The university has demonstrated by its actions as principal that agreements made between academic advisors and students will constitute a contract; however, the written rules and regulations must also be included.

The individual's academic advisor is the person on campus who best knows his/her needs and the departmental requirements. Together the student and academic advisor must negotiate a program to meet those needs. There must be no deceit, no fraud, and above all no misrepresentations, and the student must be able to rely upon the advice of the advisor. On the other hand, the academic advisor must not be misled or deceived by the student. It is recommended that the advisor keep accurate records of each conference for self protection, and protection for the student.

The academic advisor should not overstep authority by misrepresenting to the student that he/she has greater authority than has been defined for that position. The reasonable and prudent person may rely on information presented, if the person is led to believe it will help achieve desired results. The reasonable person may look to past recommendations and past decisions even though those decisions were not made with that person's circumstances and needs in mind. Therefore, it is necessary that the academic advisor stress the uniqueness of each person's needs, to enable him/her to make intelligent decisions.

The academic advisor is in a vulnerable position. Because of the responsibilities of academic advising, the advisor is a confidant of the student, and at the same time, he/she is an agent of the university. The advisor is viewed by students as having broad discretionary powers in the area of academic advising. However, the advice and counseling must center around the written publications (listing the rules and regulations) of the institution. The written publications constitute the terms of the contract between the student and the institution; and thus, the publications are the controlling matter. The academic advisor is not merely an advisor, but is the person who has knowledge and experience and can give advice intelligently and accurately to students, so they may make informed decisions.

SUMMARY

The academic advisor is vulnerable. Due to the responsibilities and duties placed upon the academic advisor, legal actions may result. The academic advisor must be alert, but not fearful. If an academic advisor fears criticism and liability, then that person's effectiveness may weaken. Courts have been reluctant to interfere in academic conflict between stu-
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