Advising is Advising: Toward Defining the Practice and Scholarship of Academic Advising

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Academic advising has emerged as a distinct interdisciplinary field and profession, but the description of its role has recently relied on analogies and metaphors. While helpful in clarifying practice, their continual use obscures the uniqueness of academic advising and masks the importance of the scholarship that underlies its practice. We use the development of archaeology as a distinct profession and scholarly field to highlight critical developments in academic advising and draw examples of key aspects in the professionalization of academic advising from The Pennsylvania State University. The scholar-practitioner model must be nurtured for all who engage in academic advising and for a distinct scholarly identity to be established within higher education. Efforts must proceed at national and local levels.

KEY WORDS: advising profession, advising research, advisor role, future of advising, history of advising, theory building

Relative Emphasis: theory, practice, research

In spite of a surge in the numbers of higher education professionals identifying themselves as academic advisors over the past 30 years (Thurmond & Miller, 2006), a struggle to define academic advising has continued. Over the past several years, this struggle has intensified, as reflected in the language used to describe academic advising in the literature and at professional conferences. Recently, academic advising has been described as counseling, learning, mentoring, guiding, encouraging, advocating, navigating, educating, teaching, and even as friendship (e.g., Hemwall & Trachte, 2005; Lowenstein, 2005; Melander, 2005; NACADA, 2007b; Rawlins & Rawlins, 2005). These descriptions have been important attempts to clarify the profession and are symptomatic of the fluid and interdisciplinary nature of the field. In our view, none of these models (including the current advising-as-teaching model) adequately represents the full purpose, value, or effect of academic advising. The use of these descriptors obscures the uniqueness of academic advising and masks the scholarly contributions the field makes to higher education. This paper is, in part, a call to engage in a deeper discussion of the professional field in its own terms and to flesh out the current understanding of the research, scholarship, and theory building that must support advisors' distinctive practice.

Academic advising involves engaging students to think critically about their academic choices and make effective plans for their educations (e.g., Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2005). As part of this process, academic advisors spend time in face-to-face interactions with students in which the topic of discussion is often immediate and mundane (e.g., what classes to take, what academic policies mean for the student, what other information the student should gather to help facilitate decision making, etc.). Underlying that immediate interaction is an advisor's interdisciplinary knowledge about student development, communication theory, academic disciplines, and much more. The distinct perspectives and contributions of academic advising rest in this rich context, which must be continually examined through both professional development and scholarly inquiry.

We draw from our academic backgrounds in anthropology and archaeology (Schulenberg) and theology and education policy (Lindhorst) as well as from our current professional context in an advising-enrollment unit at the Pennsylvania State University to frame our vision for academic advising. Like academic advising, both archaeology and theology are professional fields that are informed by a rich body of scholarship. In both archaeology and theology, practitioners are expected to consume and contribute to the scholarship of the field regardless of the context of their work, and scholars are expected to be proficient practitioners. Our perspectives regarding academic advising are also heavily influenced by our current professional environment.

Building on the scholar-practitioner models of our academic backgrounds and current professional context, we maintain two underlying principles:

1. The distinctions often drawn between practitioner and researcher and between advisor and faculty member are false and counterproductive. In this discussion, we use the

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term *advisor* to refer to anyone who engages in academic advising and do not specifically distinguish professional advisors from those who practice academic advising on a periodic or part-time basis as part of other duties. Moreover, we believe that all those who practice academic advising have a responsibility to also participate in scholarly endeavors related to academic advising, be that reading literature, conducting inquiry, or engaging in other forms of scholarship.

2. Engaging students is central to academic advising, but academic advising is much more than working directly with students. While immediate interactions of advisors are certainly fundamental, their meaning and significance rest in a broader context. The concerns and interests of academic advisors should span many areas of higher education, and advisors should not limit their scholarly attentions to working directly with students. This perspective forms the basis of our argument for the establishment of the scholarly identity of academic advising.

Analogy and Metaphor in Academic Advising: The Forest for the Trees

In 1994, an entire issue of the *NACADA Journal* was devoted to reflecting on the history and theory of academic advising. Much of the issue focused on the influential works of Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972), and the contributors reflected on the growth of advising as a profession. The issue is striking in its tone; several authors questioned whether or not substantial progress had been made in the 22 years of history represented in that issue (Ender, 1994; Laff, 1994; Pardee, 1994; Rankey, 1994; Titley, 1994). Of particular note is Bonnie Titley's (1994) reflection in her article, "How Far Have We Come—Really?" She underscored the strides the profession had made, especially in the expansion of the number of professionals and their resources, but she also pointed out that many questions asked in the early 1970s, including fundamental questions dealing with the purpose, personnel, and perceived institutional value of advising, remained unanswered. Unfortunately, another 14 years later, many of the same issues remain. We believe this stems from a narrow focus on the literal and utilitarian practice of academic advising without a concomitant focus on the scholarly contributions of academic advising to higher education.

Much of the current discussion about the identity of academic advising has centered on descriptions of the practice of academic advising, often with a heavy use of analogy and metaphor drawn from related fields. Many point toward advisors' immediate interactions with students (e.g., mentoring, guiding, encouraging, advocating, navigating, educating, teaching). These descriptions have helped to clarify aspects of practice, which we acknowledge as an important contribution to the profession. However, each one of these descriptors reduces an aspect of academic advising to a purpose shared by a related field. This borrowing of utilitarian purposes suggests that even to its practitioners, academic advising is ill defined and primarily service oriented.

Academic advising certainly has a tradition of service, but we view that service as analogous to how a doctor, lawyer, or minister serves patients, clients, or congregants. Each of these professional fields (medicine, law, theology, academic advising) includes a broad perspective on theory and scholarship as well as study of the practice of the profession. When advisors think of themselves only as coaches, guides, counselors, or teachers, this broad perspective is effectively absent. The field struggles to articulate its unique role in higher education because advisors lack the language needed to describe both the practice of academic advising and its scholarly identity independent of other fields and professions.

NACADA (2006) offered an independent description of academic advising, but the language of the Concept of Academic Advising is centered most strongly on the practice of advising, drawing heavily from the advising-as-teaching metaphor. This statement and the underlying metaphor moves advising away from models focused in service or prescriptive advice and provides a way to describe the developmental and educational role of academic advising. However, framing academic advising primarily as teaching does not encourage academic advisors to take on the scholarly role that they should play within higher education; the advisor-as-teacher model focuses primarily on the effects of the immediate advising relationship and suggests that pedagogy should be the crux of scholarship on academic advising.

Some seem dissatisfied with this state of affairs within academic advising, and a movement is underway to promote the scholarly identity of the field. Notably, Peter Hagen, as guest editor of the *NACADA Journal*, called for explicit theory building in academic advising. Building on this work, several presenters at the 2007 NACADA annual

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conference reflected on this critical juncture for the advising field and explored ways advisors might move forward. These included calls to expand the concept of research toward a scholarship of advising (Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, & Troxel, 2007), to develop theoretical perspectives more fully (Hagen, Lipschultz, Musser, & Champlin-Scharff, 2007), and to explore ways to implement current concepts of academic advising (Rugge, 2007). Our contribution to this agenda was a call to develop our own language to describe the purpose, effect, and value of academic advising (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2007). That presentation forms the basis of this paper.

The Emergence of Scholarly Professions: Examples from Archaeology and Academic Advising

The struggle among academic advisors to clarify the purposes, values, theoretical perspectives, and methods of advising is consistent with the ongoing struggles in other academic areas. Fields of study are fluid, and even well-established academic disciplines, such as history or sociology, are constantly changing. "The disciplinary map of the academy is not static; new fields emerge from older ones; previously excluded fields are admitted; and established fields extend their reach" (Clark, 2006, p. 133). Like the development of many other interdisciplinary fields, the emergence of academic advising as a distinct field is relatively recent in higher education. As an integral part of higher education, the profession of academic advising will continue to grow in complexity and importance as higher education becomes more intricate and as the diversity of students increases. The body of scholarship concerning academic advising will also grow along with the increasing diversity and educational backgrounds of its practitioners just as, for example, the discipline of archaeology grew along with its scholar-practitioners.

The emergence of archaeology as an academic discipline distinct from anthropology has some informative parallels to the development of academic advising. Like academic advising, archaeology originated as a practical solution to an immediate need, eventually became professionalized, and ultimately developed a distinct scholarly identity. Like the relationship of advising to allied fields, archaeology initially depended on its parent field of anthropology to provide its theory. More important, archaeology has maintained this connection to its parent field, while at the same time distinguishing its particular scholarly identity. The watershed moment for the development of the scholarly identity of archeology was a point at which the diversity of its practitioners dramatically increased and nationwide the call came for increased attention to explicit theory building and discussion of the field's scholarly identity. We believe we are at a similar moment for academic advising.

The Professionalization of Archaeology and its Maturing Scholarly Identity

American archaeology is a field borne primarily out of anthropology. Today it is an academic discipline closely related to anthropology but with its own cognitive structures including assumptions, concepts, models, and related theories. As with any discipline, it has a set of problems to be studied, a specialized vocabulary and mode of discourse, and a common set of methods of inquiry. The professional community has established norms for interacting and has made value judgments and commitments about topics worth studying and the means in which they should be studied. In sum, it has a scholarly identity (Donald, 2002). As with any other field of study, its development was complex, and the story told here highlights a few key developments in archaeology's history that provide a perspective on the current state of academic advising.

During its very early years, archaeology was most often practiced in the absence of theoretical purpose, although there has always been some concern about understanding and explaining the human past (Trigger, 1989). Especially during the 18th and 19th centuries, objects were collected because they were interesting or exotic (Willey & Sabloff, 1974). The practice of excavating artifacts has always carried the term "archaeology," and some who conduct excavations as a hobby call their activities "archaeology." However, this practice is different from the scholarship of archaeology and does not meet the professional standards as they have emerged in recent decades (Society for American Archaeology [SAA], 2004b).

The beginning of professional archaeology is traced to the early 1920s, when early anthropologists employed systematic excavation and collection of artifacts to document Native American cultures (Kidder, 1924; Kroeber, 1916) and stock museum collections (Stocking, 1985). Especially in the American Southwest, U.S. expansion was threatening to alter or exterminate many Native American cultures, and archaeology provided a method that early anthropologists used to meet the immediate

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need to learn more about these cultures. During this time, those who conducted archaeological excavations from a scholarly perspective were often trained as anthropologists and drew their theories from anthropological literature. However, theories generated from observing living people do not readily translate to interpreting pottery and rocks, so archaeologists often resorted to simply putting objects into chronological order and basing their conjectures about the human past on poorly fitting anthropological theory (Willey & Sabloff, 1974).

The number of people conducting excavations and studying past human cultures from an anthropological perspective increased throughout the early 20th century (Dunnell, 1986). As the number of people practicing archaeology increased, the field became professionalized, and archaeology emerged as a recognized subfield of anthropology. A few institutions began offering archaeology course work, the earliest of which included the University of Chicago field school during the late 1920s and the University of Michigan doctoral program in archaeology in 1936 (Williams, 1998). The need for a venue to exchange and publish research became apparent, and the SAA was established in 1934 to facilitate this emerging professional field (Society for American Archaeology, 2004a).

Through the mid-20th century, New Deal funding for archaeological projects brought increasing numbers of practitioners to the field (Lyon, 1996). Those who practiced archaeology and studied anthropology became increasingly diverse as a result of increased access to education through the GI bill (Deetz, 1989). Along with this diversification of practitioners, a dissatisfaction with the lack of theory generation by archaeological practitioners was growing as was recognition of the limits of borrowing theory solely from anthropology (Deetz, 1989). Beginning around 1948 (W. Taylor, 1948), growing attention was paid to the need to develop a scholarly identity for archaeology that included explicit theory building and hypothesis testing.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, archaeology became increasingly interdisciplinary and drew on methods from physics, chemistry, and geology (Willey & Sabloff, 1974) as well as theories from areas such as ecology and economics (Steward, 1955; White, 1969). The methods and theories archaeologists used became quite different from those in the parent discipline of anthropology (Stocking, 1985), and archaeologists increasingly worked in collaboration with each other and with specialists in other disciplines (Trigger, 1985). The possibility that archeology might be moving toward becoming a separate discipline, with distinct theories and methodologies, was controversial, and prominent discussions about archaeology's scholarly identity ensued.

These discussions spurred many archaeologists to think more critically about their particular contribution to the understanding of the human past. Notably, Louis Binford (1962) created a New Archaeology built on an explicit scientific model of hypothesis testing. For the next several decades, this scientific model of archaeological theory was dominant. At the same time, a growing number of scholar-practitioners came from increasingly diverse social and ethnic backgrounds, and they carried their perspectives into their research. Some archaeologists began to recognize limitations of the New Archaeology perspective, especially those relating to the study of gender and ethnicity (Conkey & Spector, 1984; Hodder, 1983). As a result of this attention to the scholarly expectations for the field and the increased diversity of scholar-practitioners, archaeologists became more intentional about their theory building, and they diversified their theoretical base dramatically.

By the 1990s, archaeologists had moved away from the narrow view of archaeology as science and had incorporated a wide range of theories, including postmodern, symbolic, and agency theories to address issues related to the middle class, gender, and ethnicity. For many archaeologists, the realm of study expanded to focus not just on the ancient past, but also on the ways in which interpretation of the past affects contemporary populations (Hodder, 2001). In turn these theoretical perspectives have had a significant impact on archaeologists' goals and methods. For example, a particularly notable change in practice that stems from this theoretical development is the regular consultation with Native American representatives in excavation and interpretation of archaeological sites (Smith & Wobst, 2005).

At this point, American archaeology has established a scholarly identity distinct from its related disciplines. In addition to the expansion of theory, work opportunities in archaeology have also expanded (Zeder, 1997). Some archaeologists are employed by universities as faculty members and conduct traditional research. Many more work for contracting companies and the U.S. government to research sites that may be damaged by development and military training. Regardless of the different reasons to engage in archaeology, all archaeologists are expected to be experts in both practice and in scholarship.

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The Professionalization of Academic Advising and Its Emergent Scholarly Identity

Like archaeology, academic advising was adopted as a method to meet immediate and practical needs. Over time, the practice of advising became more sophisticated, as developmental psychology and higher education pedagogy replaced an earlier, more rudimentary understanding of advising practice as the prescription of course choices. This transition may be compared to the movement in archaeology away from chronological ordering toward scientific hypothesis testing as the field underwent professionalization. In archaeology, an increase in practitioner diversity and theoretical challenges to the limitations of the previously dominant theoretical modes eventually created an elaboration of scholarship and represents the current state of archaeology. Academic advising may be at a similar pivotal moment.

In his 1994 reflection on his own 1972 "An Academic Advising Model," Terry O'Banion pointed out that academic advising plays an important role in the current educational landscape. He said, "If academic advising did not exist, it would have to be invented" (O'Banion, 1994, p. 119). It was invented gradually and in response to the needs of students and institutions. Professional academic advising grew out of the practical realities of complex modern colleges and universities and the rise of a developmental understanding of college students (Frost, 2000; Gordon, 1992).

In the early years of American higher education, academic advising (to the extent that it was present at all) was the responsibility of the faculty (Gordon, 1992). Although even the earliest academic advisors had concern for student academic and personal development (Gordon, 1998), advising was undertaken largely to solve students' immediate curricular needs and little attention was paid to any underlying theoretical perspectives of the advisor (Frost, 2000).

During the 20th century, student populations increased in number and diversity. Curricula expanded, offering students more academic majors and courses, while at the same time student programs and expectations for cocurricular life increased (Gordon, 1992). Faculty roles and expectations also changed as faculty members at many institutions came under increasing pressures to research, publish, and serve their institutions as well as their academic disciplines (Frost, 2000). In this context, academic advising emerged as a way to help students plan their education, and in some places, became the role of professional advising practitioners (as is the case for our unit, the Division of Undergraduate Studies [DUS] at Penn State) in addition to a faculty responsibility. This period of academic advising history parallels the early years of archaeology's emergence; both were first viewed more as a way to accomplish a goal than as a field requiring particular methods and theories.

Academic advising was formalized beyond a faculty role at Penn State in 1948 with the creation of a separate enrollment and academic support unit for World War II veterans who were entering the university on the GI Bill (Bezilla, 1985). As was happening all across the country, these veterans had high goals and aspirations, but they also often had significant academic and personal needs (Frost, 2000). When Penn State stakeholders realized that veterans often needed to change their initial academic goals and receive ongoing academic support to achieve greater success, a unit was created to handle these needs. The veterans' counselors who staffed this unit were mostly veterans themselves with education and training in psychology (Garis, 1991). Because of this arrangement and purpose, the first theoretical perspectives regarding advising at Penn State stemmed from psychological counseling.

By 1956, the experience with veterans, a longstanding interest in student development at Penn State, and an increasing focus on mental health counseling led to the creation of the Division of Counseling (DOC), which replaced the veteran's enrollment unit (Bezilla, 1985; Garis, 1991). The DOC enrolled any students (veteran or not) who were changing their academic directions and began to enroll a small number of entering first-year students. DOC staff members were responsible for mental health counseling for all Penn State students as well as for academic advising for undecided students. The DOC absorbed the veterans' counselors from the previous unit and hired additional staff from psychology and counseling backgrounds (Garis, 1991).

Working from theories about student development and mental health, the DOC staff treated indecision as a psychological condition, and academic indecision was often conflated with career indecision (Garis, 1991). At this point, academic advising for decided students at Penn State was undertaken by faculty members and advising for undecided students was the job of DOC counselors because of the perception that undecidedness required mental health intervention (E. White, personal communication, February 6, 2008).

By the early 1970s, the demand for mental health

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services at Penn State was growing. At the same time, students seeking academic advising objected to being advised in a mental health center. Members of the DOC staff and their students began to assert the difference between academic advising and mental health counseling. In 1973, the DOC was dismantled. Career Development and Placement Services and Mental Health Services offices were created within Student Affairs (Garis, 1991), and DUS was created within Academic Affairs as the academic home for exploratory and transitional students at Penn State (The Pennsylvania State University Senate Council, 1973). This moment in the history of advising at Penn State was critical: It created academic advising as a distinct practice and profession, and the academic affiliation of advising was recognized as separate from mental health and career counseling.

As professional academic advising was being established at Penn State, similar specialization was happening across the nation, albeit in a variety of ways (Gordon, 2004). Those who engaged in academic advising began to seek association with others of similar interests (Beatty, 1991). At the national level, this professionalization was signified by the creation of the National Academic Advising Association following the first national academic-advising meeting in 1977 (Beatty, 1991).

Although it took American archaeologists nearly 30 years to adopt an overarching perspective on their work (the scientific hypothesis testing of the New Archaeology), academic advisors embraced the developmental perspective early in the professionalization process. Like Binford articulated for the New Archaeology, Crookston (1972) and O'Banion (1972) created a framework for thinking about advising practices and purposes.

Significantly for the development of academic advising in DUS at Penn State, the developmental perspective of the field, coupled with the administrative alignment of advising with academic affairs, created opportunities for advisors to elaborate on the educational role of advising. Over the next 30 years, DUS academic advisors[1] developed a curriculum, pedagogy, and various delivery modes to teach students how to engage in educational decision making (Leonard & Kelly, 1996; Sams, Brown, Hussey, & Leonard, 2004). This academic focus also allowed for an expansion of the diversity of practitioners because academic advising was created with an identity separate from psychology and career counseling. These two factors—the alignment of advising with academic administrative structures and the professionalization of academic advising with an identity separate from psychology—set the stage for the current DUS unit and for advisors from the unit to develop broad perspectives about advising.

In part because of this historical alignment and because of the increasing numbers of individuals choosing academic advising as a career path, DUS advisors have become increasingly diverse in educational experience, age, and ethnicity. Coming from a variety of academic backgrounds, advisors are bringing a diversity of scholarly perspectives and skills to their work. We imagine this trend is not exclusive to DUS and expect that this diversity will affect the field of academic advising in much the same way diversity affected the development of archaeology. For example, DUS advisors hold graduate degrees in the social sciences, languages, humanities, and education policy. Each individual has carried these perspectives and scholarly interests into his or her work: Some advisors study multicultural issues; others are interested in the use of rhetorical theory; others consider the shape of higher education in other countries. These perspectives create a vibrant working atmosphere where intellectual engagement in issues that relate to higher education is valued.

This environment of inquiry also has practical implications for DUS. The way DUS academic advising is practiced is influenced by the intellectual exchange that is a part of the staff's professional behavior. Of particular note, the staff recently shared readings about the current generation of students and ways to make ideas memorable and relevant to them (Heath & Heath, 2007; M. Taylor, 2005, 2006a, 2006b). As a result of these readings, all advisors have become more aware of the challenge the Millennial generation presents, and they are engaged in further conversation about means to convey ideas memorably. Advisors are experimenting with ways to apply these ideas to the orientation program, curricular content, and advising contacts. These multifaceted educational strategies are informed by engagement in the current body of literature on students and learning and by advisors' own inquiries and assessments. We imagine our experience at DUS is not unique and that similar trends are occurring in advising units across the nation.

As the DUS example illustrates, academic advising has emerged as a distinctive profession within higher education. As colleges and universities became more complex and as students were increas-

[1] The NACADA spelling *advisors* is used for consistency with the publication; however, at Penn State, DUS staff members are referred to as *advisers*.

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ingly uncertain about their academic interests and likely to make changes in their educational plans, academic advising emerged as the field that helps students make sense of that complexity. As advisors learned more about the effect of academic advising on students and their institutions, a body of practice and scholarship, distinct from the fields of counseling or teaching, developed. Within the educational mission of DUS at Penn State, the description of academic advising clearly includes helping students understand academic disciplines and ways of thinking, helping them develop their sense of themselves, teaching them how to respond to academic experiences, facilitating their self-interpretation through personal transformations, and helping them make sense of their education as more than choosing courses or majors. Academic advisors work at that vital junction between student self-understanding and their navigation of their educational experience. In this work, academic advisors study how this process affects higher education and how the context of higher education affects the ways students construct their educations.

Because of the history of academic advising at Penn State and our current perspective on the field, we view academic advising as an interdisciplinary field, which brings together different parts of the university in both practice and theory. In practice, this broad perspective stimulates the development of diverse strategies through which advisors create opportunities for students to increase their understanding of academic choices and possibilities. In the use and development of theory, this interdisciplinary perspective offers opportunities for advisors to create distinctive scholarship about educational planning and higher education. As members of a professional community, advisors need to articulate this place in higher education more fully. Academic advising as a practice has a well-developed language to discuss its similarities to the practices of other fields, but the advising community has not developed the language needed to describe the elements of academic advising that make it unique both as a practice and as a field of study.

Advancing the Field of Academic Advising

We believe that those in academic advising need to give greater attention to three critical and interrelated areas to advance the field of academic advising: a) development of a rich and varied custom of scholarly inquiry, making use of the diverse academic backgrounds of those who advise; b) development of a clear scholarly identity and agenda at the national level; and c) development of local-level purposes centered on educational goals that can be situated within each institution's mission, vision, and values system, and the local encouragement of scholarly engagement for all advising professionals.

Diverse Theory and Diverse Scholar-Practitioners

Professional academic advisors have increasingly varied academic and professional backgrounds and diverse journeys into advising. Advisors from varied academic backgrounds need to recognize more explicitly their theoretical perspectives and consider their contributions to the theories and practice of advising. A sharper focus on scholarly identity and disciplinary characteristics through theory building is critical to the field of academic advising (Creamer, 2000; Hagen, 2005).

Just as an expanded theoretical base dramatically affected the types of questions archaeologists asked, which in turn dramatically affected their practice and scholarly identity, growth in theory building will have similar effects within academic advising. As a theoretical basis is more fully developed, academic advising professionals should define the particular scholarly perspectives they bring to higher education as well as the particular problems and issues that advisors might study. Advisors can ask relevant questions and develop applications based on the results of research. For example, what new questions about student development could advisors generate? What could academic advisors know about the effects of institutional policy on students? What could they know about how students, in turn, affect institutional policy? How will the practice of academic advising be changed by a greater understanding of stigma consciousness? (Brown & Lee, 2005; Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007) What could advisors know about higher education? What could they know about the cultural context in which academic advising and higher education exist? How will higher education be changed by Generation NeXt? (M. Taylor, 2005) What role will academic advising play with this latest generation and within changing institutions?

Their unique vantage point on both students and institutions allows advisors the opportunity to ask questions that have not been asked by others. Instead of waiting for researchers in higher education to discover these questions, academic advisors can begin to address them as part of their scholarly practice, either by conducting research alone or by collaborating with others. Like American archaeology, academic advising is an interdisciplinary field that will benefit from collaborative inquiry. This collabora-

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tion may include professional advisors, faculty members, administrators, students, and members of the public, and it should span any field that might help answer the research questions at hand.

Clearly Defined Scholarly Identity and Agenda at the National Level

The NACADA (2006) Concept of Academic Advising provides language that situates academic advising as a critical component of the educational mission of higher education, just as professors, instructors, teaching assistants, and library faculty members are critical to the mission. This statement should be regarded as a starting point for further articulation of the disciplinary interests and professional identity of academic advising. However, the statement focuses mainly on the practice of advising without providing guidance about the study of academic advising. The CAS Standards provide another foundation for articulating shared values and examining the adherence of local programs to specific expectations (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2005). Building from these works, the advising profession needs to define and express a clear purpose, value, standard of practice, and scholarly identity. Academic advisors practice in different settings and in different ways, but they need to define and interpret their work according to this larger professional community of which advisors are a part. They also must research issues related to academic advising within higher education.

Notably, this effort is underway at the national level. The 2007 NACADA Board of Directors approved a strategic plan that includes a goal to advance the body of knowledge of academic advising by promoting and disseminating research related to advising (NACADA, 2007a). This call is being acted upon through several NACADA groups, including the Research Committee, the Theory and Philosophy of Advising Commission, and a newly created Task Force for Infusing Research Throughout NACADA. As the NACADA leadership works to lay the foundation for a scholarly identity for academic advising, those who practice academic advising need to carry that vision into reality.

Local Settings for the Engagement of Scholarship

Academic advising administrators should encourage both consumption and creation of scholarship from their practitioners. To make this scholarly activity possible, work conditions that support (or prevent) research and writing about academic advising need to be evaluated. Of course this process involves advocacy with administrations to justify this commitment of time and resources for both professional and faculty advisors. If full-time academic advisors have little tangible support or incentive for scholarly activities, and if the idea of scholarly work is foreign in a particular work setting, then the field's growth is surely stunted. Similarly, if the scholarly engagement of academic advising is not valued for a faculty advisor's promotion and tenure, the field suffers.

Academic advising units should develop local histories of the growth of professional academic advising at their colleges and universities as well as acknowledge the ways that past has shaped current practice and challenges (Gordon, 2004; White & Khahpour, 2006). These histories and their realities should be shared with others in the advising community so more complex histories of advising can be developed. These histories should be situated in the context of the history of American (and international) higher education as well as in the context of changing student identities.

Personnel of academic advising units also need to define locally specific educational goals. Once educational goals are defined, advisors can demonstrate their impact on their students, their institution, and higher education. Explicitly defining this intentional impact on students is critical: How does academic advising change students? How do advisors plan, effect, and guide that change? This clarity of purpose has a direct relationship to the development of assessment plans (including statements of mission, vision, values, educational objectives, and student learning outcomes) and to conducting other forms of inquiry. These plans should be consistent with the institution's mission and strategic goals and should demonstrate the educational impact of the advising program on students and its contributions to the institution and to higher education. At the most practical level, the plans should guide program improvement.

In local settings, the language about academic advising that is used with students, colleagues, and university administration should be sharpened, and that language should be consistent with the language used at the national level. Advisors need to educate others about the purpose and underlying knowledge of academic advising so there is less mystery, more value, and more transparency. For example, in first-year academic advising sessions in DUS at Penn State, advisors have started explaining the logic and complexity of exploratory schedule planning to students and their families. The apparent simplicity of planning and

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executing a first-semester course schedule for students exploring multiple academic areas is revealed to be substantially more nuanced and significant than most people realize. Underlying theories about curricular and personal exploration are uncovered so that advisors' immediate interactions with students make more sense to them and their families. Since advisors have become more explicit about the exploratory process, students have more readily engaged in academic advising relationships beyond schedule planning. Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents have become more likely to support the advising relationship and seem less likely to consider themselves expert advisors. Other stakeholders could benefit from similar outreach.

Conclusion

Out of a clearer sense of purpose and educational goals come new insights, unique to academic advisors, on the lives of students and the meaning and shape of higher education. All members of the academic advising profession need to speak more specifically about the ways in which academic advising yields new insights that can transform institutions, and these insights should contribute to the scholarly literature in higher education. Advising professionals should be conducting research on these topics, seeking grant money to research and implement programs, and publishing results in diverse academic journals in which this field is presently underrepresented.

The identity of academic advising will become clearer when advisors can describe the nature of academic advising comprehensively. Both in national and in local settings, they need to articulate the reasons advising is important to students and institutions. Advisors can embrace and promote the separate identity of the profession and advance the field by identifying common disciplinary interests, theories, and methodologies as well as by nourishing scholarly identity. All scholars reevaluate and debate the assumptions, models, and theories associated with their fields. They define a set of problems that are valued and are worthy of study. Debates regarding the scholarly identity of academic advising, including the subjects about which advisors inquire, the methods they use, the theoretical perspectives they recognize, and the ethics of their practices should overshadow the debate over who makes up the profession and their practice. Advising is advising; that is established. Establishing a scholarly identity should become the priority within academic advising.

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