

A Philosophy on Academic Advisement

With the graying of my hair and twenty years of teaching and advising experience on this campus, I have developed a philosophy on academic advisement that has primarily been shaped by the very students that I advise. It consists of the following three basic tenets:

Set the Students at Ease During Advisement

I believe the first, and perhaps the most important tenet of academic advisement is to develop a genuine rapport with your advisees. By surrounding a student with a reassuring environment, it encourages students to look forward to advisement sessions as opportunities to discuss career plans as well as personal issues that range from test anxiety to roommate dilemmas. To set the tone for the advisement session, I make every effort to schedule the advisement appointment at a time that is convenient with the student's schedule, a task that is typically performed by back-and-forth email messages. Furthermore, even my office "décor" is "designed" around advisement sessions. Amongst the clutter of books and file folders are large wall posters, a wide variety of memorabilia and a photo show on my computer monitor. All of this is designed to evoke a placid environment that oftentimes serves as a starting point for discussions regarding common interests outside the academic arena.

Focus on the Big Picture

The second tenet of my advisement philosophy is to focus on the "Big Picture." Typically, I initiate this discussion with a simple question, "What is your final destination in life?" By viewing the end of the academic tunnel first, we can assimilate a program of study that is designed to achieve those goals upon graduation. Ultimately, that is our job as academic advisors, helping students fulfill their dreams and goals in life. We are the facilitator that stands between the reality of current academia and future aspirations. It is our job to make those ambitions a reality.

Know the "Nuts and Bolts" of the Advisement Process

The third, and final, tenet of my advisement philosophy is knowing the "nuts and bolts" of the advisement process. If you are in the position of advising students, then you are obliged to give them reliable advice, because it may well have a significant impact on their future success. Be knowledgeable about academia, including the registration process, degree requirements, scholarship opportunities, internships, study abroad programs, research opportunities and an endless list of associated areas. Furthermore, as advisors, we must also realize that the "advisement knowledge base" is not static. It is incessantly altered by institutional policies. More importantly, it is constantly modified by day-to-day student interactions, peer recommendations and prior experiences.

Thus, from my perspective, advisement is a vital process in the student's academic journey. It provides students the opportunity to escape the anonymity of the classroom and receive individual faculty attention that focuses on their personal ambitions. Together, advisor and advisee can develop strategies designed to achieve the student's goals. In this capacity, as academic advisors, we act as a conduit that link and mold the college experience so it will bring fruition to their "final destination in life."