

The Changing Advising Needs of Undergraduate Students

by

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## ABSTRACT

Academic advising plays an important role in the education and retention of college students. Developmental advising is concerned with the development of the whole student throughout his or her academic career. As students develop and mature, it is expected that the topics they present to advisors will change. It is also expected that advisors will vary the topics they raise with different students as the students progress through their academic careers.

This study was designed to determine if the advising topics that traditional-age undergraduate students present to advisors vary by academic level. Further, the study looked at whether these topics differ by gender or race. Topics raised by advisors were also examined to determine if the topics raised by advisors varied by academic level, gender, or race of the student. Examining the topics raised by advisors is one way to assess whether advisors are utilizing a prescriptive or developmental model of advising.

Data were collected over a two-month period during the spring semester, 2000 at a research university in the Southeast. Eleven professional advisors agreed to participate in the study from six different departments. Students were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study when they came to see one of the participating advisors. Eighty undergraduate students agreed to participate in the study. Prior to meeting with the advisor, students were asked to provide demographic information and answer an interview question to determine the topics they planned to raise during the advising session. Advisors completed surveys following the advising sessions providing information on topics raised by the students and topics that the advisors themselves raised.

No significant differences were found in the types of topics raised by students or advisors by academic level, gender, or race. The majority of the topics discussed dealt with academic issues such as academic progress, course selection, and major selection. On average, students raised 3.99 topics per session and advisors raised an additional 1.41 topics per session for a total of 5.50 topics per advising session. Most advising sessions were 15 to 20 minutes in length. Non-

White students raised on average more topics than did White students. Because of the number of topics raised in a relatively short period of time, as well as the narrow range of topics covered, the results of this study indicate that a traditional, information giving model of advising is largely being utilized by advisors in the study.

The results of this study suggest that advisors have little time in advising sessions to do little other than provide information on a limited range of topics. This study highlights the amount of time advisors spend answering routine academic questions during advising sessions. With this awareness, advisors can begin to provide some of this academic information using different means. This would provide more time in advising sessions to practice a developmental approach to advising that spans academic, career, and life issues.

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My favorite scripture is Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and he will direct your paths.” From the beginning of this experience until now, I have lived by this verse. God has lead me down this path, from being accepted to this program to blessing me with a wonderful cohort of fellow students to this final test of finishing my thesis. Without Him, I could not have succeeded.

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