

**Current and Preferred Academic Advising Styles of African American Students in
the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech**

by

Melendez O. Byrd

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APPROVED:

David E. Hutchins, Co-Chair

Nancy E. Bodenhorn, Co-Chair

Gary E. Skaggs

Octavia D. Madison-Colmore

Thomas H. Hohenshil

James L. Moore, III

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Melendez O. Byrd

Counselor Education Program Area
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

David E. Hutchins & Nancy E. Bodenhorn
Committee Co-Chairs

Abstract

This study was designed to explore the advising styles that are currently perceived and preferred by African American and White students in the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech. The high attrition rate of African Americans in the engineering colleges both nationally and at Virginia Tech makes it critical to investigate what can be done to increase retention. The lack of awareness of academic advising preferences could be a major component in the high attrition of African American students in the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech. Moreover, increased awareness and understanding for advisors, faculty, administrators and even students will befall, and in turn strengthen retention.

The purpose of this study was to determine; (a) the current advising African American and White students in the College of Engineering at Virginia Tech are perceiving; prescriptive versus developmental; and (b) what the preferences are for advising African American and White students in engineering; prescriptive versus developmental. This study specifically examined the comparisons between race, gender, classification, grade point average (GPA), and major.

The instrument that was administered via the Internet is called the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sander, 1984). This four-part instrument measures the level of the developmental or prescriptive advising that occurs between students and advisors and student satisfaction with advising in the College of Engineering. The sample consisted of a total of 373 undergraduate engineering students, 265 (71%) males and 108 (29%) females. African Americans made up 35% ($n = 132$) of the sample and Whites 65% ($n = 241$). The sample consisted of 25% ($n = 93$) African American males, 10% ($n = 39$) African American females, 46% ($n = 172$) White males, and 19% ($n = 69$) White females. A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t -tests were conducted to analyze differences in advising style when categorized by race, gender, classification, GPA, and major.

The results revealed a significant difference between the style of academic advising currently perceived by African American and White engineering students. The majority of the African Americans reported receiving prescriptive advising and the majority of the Whites reported receiving a developmental style of advising. The results also indicated that the majority of the African American males (55%) perceived receiving a prescriptive style of advising. When looking at African Americans when categorized by classifications, all reported receiving a prescriptive style of advising. The junior class of African Americans was the only group that is borderline prescriptive/developmental. The ANOVA test also indicated a significant interaction between race and GPA. Results showed that African Americans engineering students in the GPA categories of 1.0-1.9 and 2.0-2.9 reported receiving prescriptive advising, while the 3.0-3.9 category of African Americans reported receiving developmental advising. This data was not

consistent with White students in the GPA category of 1.0-1.9. All White students regardless of GPA reported receiving a developmental style of advising. All engineering students regardless of race, gender, classification, GPA, or major preferred a developmental style of advising. African American females significantly preferred a more developmental style of advising than the other groups. A Chi square test of independence also indicated that a significantly large portion of African American students felt that their academic advisor did not understand them.

Dedication

There are many individuals that I would love to dedicate my dissertation to, but only two come to mind, my beautiful mother and wife. This is for you Jacqueline LaVerne Purdie-Lewis, and Dr. Lynelle Winona Slade-Byrd.

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels. Proverbs 1:5

Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end. Proverbs 19:20.

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