

# Developmental Advising: Practices and Attitudes of Faculty Advisors

Susan H. Frost, Emory University

*In an attempt to join theory and practice and contribute to the teaching function of academic advising, advising procedures at two colleges were studied. After participating in organized advising programs, students reported the nature of the advising they received. Then faculty advisors in programs rated as developmental by their students answered questions about specific advising attitudes and practices. The results suggest effective advisor attitudes and practices.*

Greenwood (1984) describes advising as an important and influential component of a higher education institution having "the capacity to become a primary integrating factor that brings students, faculty, . . . and curriculum together into a truly meaningful educational whole" (p. 64), and Astin (1984) identifies advising as a major contributor to student involvement. However, national higher education study committees and researchers of student opinion consistently point to advising as an important academic support service in need of attention (Association of American Colleges, 1985; Astin, Korn, & Green, 1987; National Institute of Education, 1984).

Improved advising services have been discussed for some time. In an effort to define the teaching function of advising, Crookston (1972) identified (a) prescriptive or traditional advising, in which students receive answers to specific questions and are closely supervised by advisors; and (b) developmental advising, a relationship based on shared responsibility, in which students participate in the academic planning process. Crookston views colleges and universities as intellectual learning centers. Both inside and outside the classroom individuals and social systems interact. They use developmental tasks both inside and outside the institution for personal growth. In this environment the advising relationship becomes a negotiated agreement between students and teachers. Advisors focus on students' potential to become self-directed. In contrast, prescriptive advising is a limiting, supervisory relationship in which advisors take the initiative to see that students fulfill curricular requirements.

Grites (1979), Ender, Winston, and Miller

(1984), Gardner (1986), and Frost (1990b) affirm Crookston's view. Advising, like teaching, should provide for new directions of thought and have the capacity to change behavior. College students not only look for answers to questions concerning course load and registration, but they also seek mentors to help in acquiring the skills to plan their academic futures. Students identify intellectual issues as the most significant they face and seem to prefer advising relationships centered on academic matters, not personal concerns (Fielstein, 1987, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978; Sagaria, Higginson, & White, 1980; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1980). The advising relationship offers a logical setting to explore individual academic questions. When structured developmentally, advising can become "the vehicle most likely to succeed" (Gordon, 1988, p. 107) in providing a personalized education and encouraging students to view college as a positive experience.

Although developmental advising is espoused in the literature, in student personnel and higher education graduate programs, and in planning and policy arenas (Goetz & White, 1986; Grites, 1989), the concept is not widely implemented on college or university campuses. Surveys indicate that students are dissatisfied with advising, which they describe as a low-status, prescriptive function addressing their informational needs only (Boyer, 1987; Habley, 1988; McLaughlin & Starr, 1982; Winston & Sandor, 1984b). For example, after two years 52% of the respondents in the American Council on Education—University of California at Los Angeles Cooperative Institutional Research Program were least satisfied with academic advising as one of the personal services offered by colleges and universities. The findings lead researchers to express particular concern for the low rating because they identify advising as the principal tool for involving students in the curriculum (Astin et al., 1987).

In contrast, this research investigated academic advising programs at two liberal arts women's colleges and found that both programs received developmental ratings from students (Frost, 1989b, 1990a). At one college a significant rela-

relationship between the explained variance in pre- and posttest scores on two of the five scales of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal and developmental advising was found. The student response rate in this study was 73% ( $n = 206$ ). Only 9% of those completing the inventory ( $n = 18$ ) reported that they were advised prescriptively.

### Purpose of the Study

This research is an investigation of the advising attitudes and practices of faculty members identified as developmental advisors by students participating in the study described above (Frost, 1989b, 1990a). The advisors were surveyed to determine specific attitudes and practices of developmental academic advisors. Analysis revealed categories of responses of academic advisors who work to establish effective, developmental relationships with students.

### Method

#### Participants and Data Collection

Participants were faculty members ( $n = 48$ ) who served as freshman advisors and received developmental ratings from students in the earlier study (Frost, 1989b, 1990a). During that study, both groups of advisors served in extended orientation and advising programs (15 weeks at College 1; 20 weeks at College 2). At both colleges freshman participation was required. All advisors received training during preterm workshops, but developmental advising techniques were not specifically discussed with either group. Advising at both colleges takes place in group and individual settings. At the end of the respective advising periods students completed the *Academic Advising Inventory* (Winston & Sandor, 1984a), an instrument designed to evaluate advising from a theoretically grounded perspective and allow programs at various institutions to be compared. In describing their advising experiences, students chose between prescriptive and developmental orientations of the advising relationship. Prescriptive scores on the advising inventory range from 14 to 56; developmental scores range from 57 to 112. In the earlier study, advising inventory mean scores were College 1 = 70.92 (SD = 14.48); College 2 = 79.02 (SD = 14.32).

During the academic year following that study, advisors completed a survey designed to investigate specific advising attitudes and prac-

tices that resulted in developmental ratings from students on the earlier study. Of the 48 advisors eligible to participate, 37 returned usable responses for a response rate of 77%.

### Instrumentation and Data Analysis

The Academic Advisor Inventory was developed for this study. It can be completed in 15 minutes. To assess specific attitudes and practices of developmental advisors, 12 items parallel those of the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1984a). For example, students completing the advising inventory rate the extent to which advisors help students to learn about programs and courses for themselves (a developmental response) or tell students about courses and programs (a prescriptive response). To learn which attitudes and practices resulted in students reporting that advisors helped students learn about programs and courses (as opposed to advisors telling students about programs and courses), the advisor survey includes the following question:

To help your advisees learn about college courses and programs you

- 1. Direct them to the college bulletin.
- 2. Suggest that they talk with the proper department chair.
- 3. Suggest that they talk with the course instructor.
- 4. Suggest that they talk with other students who have taken the course.
- 5. Describe course and program content to them yourself.

Possible responses are *never*, *rarely*, *occasionally*, *often*, and *always*. Advising administrators, faculty advisors, and researchers critiqued the instrument before a final form was adopted. Then comments concerning clarity and format were incorporated into the final form of the instrument.

A percentage distribution reflects the responses to the advisor survey. For reporting purposes, the *never* and *rarely* and the *often* and *always* categories were collapsed.

### Results

The percentage distribution (see Table 1) identifies the frequency with which participating faculty members report *always* or *often*, *occasionally*, or *rarely* or *never* employing various activi-

**TABLE 1**  
**Distribution of Developmental Advisors' Responses**  
**to the Academic Advisor Inventory (n = 37)**

	Percent Responding		
	Never or Rarely	Occasionally	Often or Always
To familiarize students with the college program, advisors:			
direct them to the college bulletin.	37	22	11
suggest that they talk with the proper department chair.	37	14	38
suggest that they talk with the course instructor.	37	5	32
suggest that they talk with other students who have taken the course.	37	31	39
describe course and program content themselves.	36	17	39
To allow students to make scheduling decisions, advisors:			
plan several schedules and let students choose.	36	86	8
have students plan one schedule to discuss with the advisor.	37	22	27
have students plan several schedules to discuss with the advisor.	37	28	13
allow students to plan the schedule and sign the form as the advisor.	37	33	33
talk with students about schedule planning.	36	3	14
To begin discussion about vocational planning with students, advisors:			
suggest career options for certain majors.	36	30	41
suggest that students talk with department chairs about majors.	36	8	19
suggest that students talk with instructors about majors.	36	19	16
direct students to career counseling services on campus.	37	19	14
discuss developing a plan for decision-making activities.	36	49	11
To indicate interest in students' outside activities, advisors:			
ask specific questions about their activities.	37	22	24
engage in casual conversation about these activities.	37	5	30
participate in outside activities with students.	37	38	35
encourage students to become involved in outside activities.	37	11	24
indicate that they value participation in outside activities.	37	11	24
To determine who has responsibility for advising activities, advisors:			
discuss specifically advisor and student responsibilities.	36	31	28
discuss generally advisor and student responsibilities.	37	11	22
indicate responsibilities through action rather than discussion.	27	19	35
use an advising contract with duties and responsibilities spelled out.	36	100	0
To help students make decisions, advisors:			
invite students to come to them to discuss problems.	36	3	8
use the advising relationship to model problem-solving skills.	37	41	22
discuss problem-solving skills with students in general.	37	35	39
provide materials that review good problem-solving skills.	37	86	8
are explicit about problem-solving steps in the advising relationship.	36	33	22
To help students learn about time management, advisors:			
talk to students specifically about time management.	36	6	25
ask students about their time-management skills in casual conversation.	37	14	44
suggest sources from which students can learn about time management.	36	44	19
help students develop a specific time-management plan.	36	44	33
To help students develop effective study habits, advisors:			
talk to students specifically about study habits.	37	11	19
ask students about study habits in casual conversation.	37	14	35
suggest sources from which students can learn study skills.	37	46	24
refer students to academic support services on campus.	34	14	36
To help students choose a major, advisors:			
suggest students talk with faculty in departments of interest.	36	3	8
suggest students seek help in the career counseling office.	37	10	41
suggest students talk with students in departments of interest.	37	14	24
explore career choices with students.	37	16	16
To engage students in conversation about other-than-academic matters, advisors:			
have specific discussions about outside activities.	37	33	30
have general discussions about outside activities.	36	8	31
participate with students in outside activities.	37	43	33
suggest activities for students to pursue.	37	46	43
To keep students informed of their academic progress, advisors:			
make appointments with students to review academic progress.	37	24	27
review academic progress in casual meetings.	36	17	31
review progress in meetings to discuss the next term's classes.	36	6	19
communicate about students' academic progress in writing.	36	31	29
To help students identify realistic academic goals, advisors:			
ask specifically about academic performance.	37	11	32
get this information from high school transcripts.	37	19	8
get this information from entering test scores (SAT or ACT).	37	16	22
get this information from institutional placement scores.	36	30	11

ties in their roles as developmental advisors. The items to which a majority responded *always* or *often* are classified into three thematic categories (Table 2).

## Discussion

The practices of more than half of the respondents suggest that developmental advisors

**TABLE 2**  
**Practices That Developmental Advisors Report Using "Often" or "Always" ( $n = 37$ )**

To involve students in the college experience, developmental advisors:

- familiarize students with the college program by
  - directing them to the college bulletin.
  - suggesting that they talk with the course instructor.
- allow students to make scheduling decisions by
  - having students plan one schedule for discussion.
  - having students plan several schedules for discussion.
- begin discussion about vocational planning by
  - suggesting that students talk with department chairs about majors.
  - suggesting that students talk with instructors about majors.
  - directing students to career counseling services on campus.
- help students choose a major by
  - suggesting students talk with faculty in departments of interest.
  - suggesting students talk with students in departments of interest.

To explore factors leading to student success, developmental advisors:

- allow students to make scheduling decisions by
  - talking with students about schedule planning.
- determine who has responsibility for advising activities by
  - discussing generally advisor and student responsibilities.
- I help students make decisions by
  - inviting students to come to them to discuss problems.
- I help students learn about time management by
  - talking to students specifically about time management.
- I help students develop effective study habits by
  - talking to students specifically about study habits.
  - asking students about study habits in casual conversation.
  - referring students to academic support services on campus.
- help students choose a major by
  - exploring career choices with students.

To display interest in students' academic and extracurricular progress, developmental advisors:

- indicate interest in students' outside activities by
  - asking specific questions about their activities.
  - engaging in casual conversation about these activities.
  - encouraging students to become involved in outside activities.
  - indicating that they value participation in outside activities.
- I engage students in conversation about other-than-academic matters by
  - having general discussions about outside activities.
- I keep students informed of their academic progress by
  - reviewing academic progress in casual meetings.
  - reviewing progress in meetings to discuss the next term's classes.
- I help students identify realistic academic goals by
  - asking specifically about academic performance.
  - getting this information from high school transcripts.
  - getting this information from entering test scores (SAT or ACT).
  - getting this information from institutional placement scores.

use the academic advising relationship to (a) involve students in their individual college experiences, including advising; (b) explore with students those factors contributing to student success; and (c) display interest in students' academic and extracurricular progress. For example, the advisors questioned involve students in their individual college experiences by guiding students to campus resources to gather the information they need to make decisions about courses, majors, and careers. They encourage students to question department chairs, instructors, and students before they commit to a major and to plan more than one schedule for consideration during advising conferences.

Advising practices that encourage students to explore factors leading to student success include talking about time management, study skills, planning techniques, shared advising responsibilities, and problem solving. Advisors display interest in students' progress when they inquire about past performance, academic success, career plans, and outside interests (see Table 2). Participants in the study report rarely making decisions for students, preferring instead to engage students in the decision-making process and to encourage them to take responsibility for their educational futures. For instance, Table 1 shows that the majority of developmental advisors did not plan schedules, specify the parameters of advisement by formal contract, or tell students what steps to take in problem solving.

More than half the developmental advisors appear to use practices that support Fielstein's (1987, 1989) findings regarding student preferences in the advising relationship. Although students seem to desire a personal relationship with advisors, they prefer the relationship to be organized around academic matters and personal concerns. The results of this study suggest that developmental advisors want to get to know students personally and they display an interest in students' total college experiences. For example, advisors in the study say that they suggest students learn about the college program by talking with instructors, help students with scheduling decisions by having them plan more than one schedule for discussion, and ask students specific questions about academic programs and outside activities. Also the advisors report that they encourage students to ask open-ended questions, use campus resources to find answers, and plan schedules and courses around the outcomes of their explorations.

In addition to providing insight into the activ-

ities of developmental academic advisors, the study also explored their attitudes. Rather than viewing the advising relationship only as a mechanism for schedule planning and course registration, the respondents seem to use the relationship to encourage students to plan actively for their educational futures. It seems likely that students who engage in such advising activities will develop useful skills as they move through college and plan their futures.

Because advising is an out-of-class academic experience that all students share and because most advising is done by faculty members (Habley & Crockett, 1988), specific attitudes and practices of successful advisors are important. Although a limited number of advisors from two private, single-sex institutions were eligible to participate in the study, the findings are generalizable to institutions that structure advising to allow students and faculty members to form an advising relationship. The practices identified can be adopted without major revisions in existing programs. Instead, low- or no-cost procedures and the important accompanying attitudes provide a framework around which committed advisors can foster student participation in academic advising and in the larger college environment.

Considering the possible gains to students and to institutions from having more specific information about successful academic advising relationships, additional research is warranted. Variations on the study might include studies involving larger advisor populations and those designed to investigate the attitudes and practices of those who advise diverse student groups with success.

## References

- Association of American Colleges. (1985). *Integrity in the college curriculum: A report to the academic community*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25(4), 297-307.
- Astin, A., Korn, W., & Green, K. (1987). Retaining and satisfying students. *Educational Record*, 68(1), 36-42.
- Boyer, E. L. (1987). *College: The undergraduate experience in America*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Crookston, B. B. (1972). A developmental view of academic advising as teaching. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 13, 12-17.
- Ender, S. C., Winston, R. B., Jr., & Miller, T. K. (1984). Academic advising reconsidered. In R. B. Winston, Jr., T. K. Miller, S. C. Ender, T. J. Grites,

- & Associates (Eds.), *Developmental academic advising* (pp. 5-34). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fielstein, L. L. (1987). Student preferences for personal contact in a student-faculty advising relationship. *NACADA Journal*, 7(2), 34-40.
- Fielstein, L. L. (1989). Student priorities for academic advising: Do they want a personal relationship? *NACADA Journal*, 9(1), 33-38.
- Frost, S. H. (1989). *Academic advisor survey*. Atlanta, GA: Author.
- Frost, S. H. (1989). The effects of academic advising and the frequency of faculty contact on the cognitive development of college freshmen. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, DA9007667.
- Frost, S. H. (1990). A comparison of developmental advising at two small colleges. *NACADA Journal*, 10(2), 9-13.
- Frost, S. H. (1990). *Academic advising for student success: A system of shared responsibility* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 3). Washington, DC: George Washington University School of Education and Human Development.
- Gardner, J. N. (1986). The freshman year experience. *College and University*, 61, 261-274.
- Goetz, J. J., & White, E. R. (1986). A survey of graduate programs addressing the preparation of professional academic advisors. *NACADA Journal*, 2(2), 43-48.
- Gordon, V. N. (1988). Developmental advising. In W. R. Habley (Ed.), *The status and future of academic advising: Problems and promise* (pp. 107-118). Iowa City, IA: The ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices.
- Greenwood, J. D. (1984). Academic advising and institutional goals: A president's perspective. In R. B. Winston, Jr., T. K. Miller, S. C. Ender, T. J. Grites, & Associates (Eds.), *Developmental academic advising* (pp. 64-88). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Grites, T. J. (1979). *Academic advising: Getting us through the eighties* (AAHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report No. 7). Washington, DC: American College Testing Program.
- Grites, T. J. (1989). Organizational contacts. In S. F. Ford (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 13th national conference of the National Academic Advising Association* (pp. 66-67). Manhattan, KS: NACADA.
- Habley, W. R. (1988). Introduction and overview. In W. R. Habley (Ed.), *The status and future of academic advising: Problems and promise* (pp. 1-10). Iowa City, IA: The ACT National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices.
- Habley, W. R., & Crockett, D. S. (1988). The third ACT national survey of academic advising. In W. R. Habley (Ed.), *The status and future of academic advising: Problems and promise* (pp. 11-76). Iowa City, IA: The ACT National Center of the Advancement of Educational Practices.
- McLaughlin, B. M., & Starr, E. A. (1982). Academic advising literature since 1965: A *College Student Personnel Abstracts* review. *NACADA Journal*, 2(2), 14-23.
- National Institute of Education. (1984). *Involvement in learning: Realizing the potential of American higher education*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1978). Student-faculty informal relationships and freshman year educational outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research*, 71, 183-189.
- Sagaria, M. A. D., Higginson, L. C., & White, E. R. (1980). Perceived needs of entering freshman: The primacy of academic issues. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21, 243-247.
- Terenzini, P. T., & Pascarella, E. T. (1980). Student/faculty relationships and freshman year educational outcomes: A further investigation. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21, 521-528.
- Winston, R. B., Jr., & Sandor, J. A. (1984). *Academic advising inventory*. Athens, GA: Student Development Associates.
- Winston, R. B., Jr., & Sandor, J. A. (1984). Developmental academic advising: What do students want? *NACADA Journal*, 4(1), 5-13.
- Swan H. Frost is director of institutional planning and research. Address correspondence concerning this article to her at 114 Administration Building, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322.

# The Mentoring-Empowered Model: Professional Role Functions in Graduate Student Advisement

Mary J. Selke, University of Northern Iowa  
Terrence D. Wong, Marquette University

*The Mentoring-Empowered Model provides a developmental framework for graduate student advisement that addresses the psychosocial and developmental needs of graduate students. The model is based upon (a) existing concepts of graduate student advisement, (b) the recently formalized knowledge base pertaining to educational mentoring, and (c) Erikson's stages of human development. The Mentoring-Empowered Model provides graduate advisors with six characteristics essential to creating a developmental context for graduate student advisement and five behavior-specific role functions to facilitate implementation.*

Advising graduate students is a balancing act that frequently involves trial and error on the part of professors and students. Many graduate students are successful, experienced adults who are more accustomed to giving advice than to receiving it. Most adult students know what they want and may view graduate study as one step in the process of achieving their goals. Faculty advisors and their graduate students may have understandably ambiguous expectations of the advisor's role.

Reluctant to push advisement with self-directed adults, graduate advisors may define the advisement role solely in terms of processing paperwork and signing off on forms. This statement may be appalling and foreign to advisors directing the research pursuits of a carefully limited number of doctoral or master's students. It may be sadly familiar to advisors whose graduate advising loads are incongruent with crucial factors to consider when determining an appropriate number of advisees: (a) the field of study, (b) the faculty member's other responsibilities, and (c) the quality of students assigned (Council of Graduate Schools, 1990a). What kind of advising does an independent adult student really need, anyway?

Advisement needs of graduate students differ for many reasons. For example, doctoral students' needs for research direction differ in scope and intensity from those of master's students. Also, students progressing directly into graduate schools from undergraduate programs present different needs from those of graduate

students returning to campus after a period of time. Just as the structure and content of graduate programs are more varied than those of undergraduate programs (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992), the needs and priorities of students entering graduate programs reflect the diversity of paths taken as adults.

Professors charged with advising this increasingly diverse group of adult students often receive little or no guidance from their universities in regard to their advisor role, despite its central importance in graduate study (Council of Graduate Schools, 1991). The prevailing belief is that faculty members learn all they need to know about advising through their own experiences as doctoral students and teachers, an approach described by the Council of Graduate Schools as haphazard at best.

The purpose of this article is to provide a model for graduate student advisement that clarifies the role of the advisor within a developmental context that meets the needs of adult students. Although applications of the model will vary according to degree program levels and types, the model is based upon the psychosocial needs of adult learners and offers a comprehensive approach.

## Graduate Student Identity

Students who choose to pursue graduate study may do so immediately or may postpone it for a while. In either case, by the time such students begin graduate programs their career goals have become more focused. Increased autonomy and responsibility for learning is possible. Developmental advisement needs reflect their adult status.

By the time students enter master's or doctoral programs, they have progressed beyond the concerns and needs of late adolescence into the sixth and seventh of the eight psychosocial stages of human development posited by Erikson (1959). In the sixth stage, characterized by an intimacy crisis, a person must conquer the fear of identity loss to experience mutual sharing. Not to do so leads to isolation. Therefore, it