Noel-Levitz
Advanced Advising Webinar Series

Webinar 3, June 6, 2007
Strategies for Using Academic Advising to Enhance Retention and Student Engagement

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Strategies for Using Academic Advising to Enhance Retention and Student Engagement

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Question

• Can a good advising program NOT effectively boost retention and enhance student engagement?

Keys

• Dynamic and highly effective design
• Focused attention on student needs, satisfaction, and outcomes

Getting started

• Think about the advising program at your institution
How actively and intentionally do you…
• Plan advising to grow retention?
• Deploy advising for the purpose of student engagement?
Consider the state of your advising system

Development
- Carefully planned and implemented A to Z
- Organic
- Both

Currently
- In jeopardy
- Status quo
- Anticipating change
  Actively managing change
- Optimal

Essential strategy themes
- Key knowledge
- Missions and advising models
- Funding and resources
- Communication
- Program design and revision
- Effective leadership
University of Cincinnati

McMicken College of Arts and Sciences
- Largest college in public, urban research university of 33K students and 17 colleges
- Split advising model – professional and faculty
- Funding for more advisors, lower ratios
- Redesigned some organizational structures and processes, added programs
- Retention, student engagement, and student satisfaction are on the rise!

University of Cincinnati

Center for Exploratory Studies
- Supplemental advising on major selection
- Highly personalized advising and programming
- Vision reached in four years
- High retention and student satisfaction rates
- Highlighted in New York Times
- Featured in NACADA 2007 monograph, Advising Special Populations
Implementing the strategies: Key knowledge

Know the current research and standards

Key knowledge

Empirical body of evidence

- Student retention and persistence is positively impacted by student engagement and student satisfaction
- Advising plays a significant role in impacting these variables
Know the current research and standards

Key knowledge

Based upon research and literature
- Student satisfaction
- Retention
- Academic advising
- Student engagement
- Interrelationship

Published authors
- Tinto, Astin, Pascarella, Ternzini, Noel, Levitz,
  Crockett, Habley, Gordon, Boyer, Gardner, Winston,
  Miller, Wyckoff, Levin, Bean, etc.

Know the current research and standards

Key knowledge

National resources
- NACADA
- Noel-Levitz
- FYE
- ACT
- CAS standards
- Jossey-Bass publications
- Conferences and institutes
- Journals: Journal of College Student Development
  Journal of College Student Retention; NACADA
  Journal; Journal of Blacks in Higher Education
Know the current research and standards

Key knowledge

Campus delivery
- Advisor training forums
- UCUAADA
- Faculty presenters
- Article reviews disseminated
- List-serves (campus and national)
- Staff meetings
- Webinars
- Advisor resource center

Conduct assessment

Key knowledge

DATA DRIVES DOLLARS!
…but your case must still be made
- Student demographics and academic achievement (grades, portfolios, etc.)
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI) by Noel-Levitz
- Student retention statistics and benchmarks
- Survey of Academic Advising (by ACT)
- Others
Pay attention to your context
Key knowledge

- Institution – public/private, urban/rural, residential/commuter, research-intensive, selective, etc.
- Special context features
- Legislative structures
- Funding model and financials
- Institutional buy-in

Awareness of changing landscape
Key knowledge

- Current focus on retention
- Shifting to student learning outcomes and student success (Secretary of Education – M. Spellings plan “A Test of Leadership: Committing to Advance Postsecondary Education for All Americans”)
- Legislative policy trends drive public resource changes
- Demographics and generational expectations shifting
Key knowledge strategies

- Know the current research and standards
- Conduct assessment
- Pay attention to your context
- Awareness of changing landscape

Implementing the strategies: Missions and advising models
Plan mission and objectives inclusively
Missions and advising models

- Faculty, staff, and students
- Stakeholders
- Ownership, pride, buy-in, awareness
- Progress report cards
- Intentional outcomes
- More effective outcomes

Provide and support great advisors
Missions and advising models

- Hiring excellence
- Appropriate compensation
- Quality training program
- Effective evaluation and recognition
- Advisor job structures
- Support effectively
- Advising as teaching
Identify advising models that fit
Missions and advising models

- Fit institution type and student needs
- Smaller – more generalized
- Larger – more specialized
- Pure, team, or mixed approach
- Peer, GA, faculty, professional, centralized, decentralized, split, hybrid, supplemental, etc.
- Don’t decide by default – be creative!

Faculty advising
- Inclusion in RPT process
- Incentivize (training stipends, etc.)
- Training developed with faculty needs and interests in mind
- Selection of faculty advisors (vs. mandated)
- Release time from teaching
- Advising more curriculum-specific for most faculty
- Supplemental advising for special issues and service needs
- Regular contact with advising centers
Identify advising models that fit
Missions and advising models

Professional staff advising
• Manageable student/advisor ratios
• Diversified, student-centered backgrounds
• Train intensively
• Pay appropriately
• Select carefully
• High expectations
• Livable working conditions

Missions and advising model strategies

• Plan mission and objectives inclusively
• Provide and support great advisors
• Identify advising models that fit
Implementing the strategies: Funding and resources

Get resources effectively and creatively

Funding and resources
  • Use assessment + research + effective process to generate change
  • Know decision-makers
  • Know how decisions are made
  • Know institutional priorities and mission
  • Know data used in decision-making
  • Make the case effectively and consistently
  • Grant writing and reporting
Use resources efficiently

Funding and resources

- Maximize advising impact with variety of types
- Deploy technology for more high-tech and high-touch approach
- Accountability for expenditures is increasing

Funding and resource strategies

- Get resources effectively and creatively
- Use resources efficiently
Implementing the strategies: communication

Listen to your students and staff

Communication

Students
- Common comments to advisors and office staff
- Formal student satisfaction survey
- Informal advising survey + incentive (Ipod)
- Survey Monkey crunches the data in real time and highly affordable
- Focus groups with pizza

Staff
- Staff meetings and one-on-ones
- Staff/employee surveys (formal or informal)
- Solicit feedback continuously with timely follow up
- Utilize an outside consultant
Keep students in the loop

Communication

• Advising center happenings, goals, progress, problems you’re working on; successes, changes, what you’re doing with their feedback
• Communicate as though in a personal relationship
• Timely reinforcement (reminders) of processes and procedures
• On their turf physically and technologically

What’s working
• Web tools
• E-newsletters (html)
• Signs
• Print pieces
• Student newspaper
• Targeted e-mail from advisor
• Blackboard communities
• Advising podcasts
• Online communities (Facebook or MySpace)
• Personal phone calls
Keep staff and administration informed

Communication

Communicate with staff
- Continuous updates about big-picture issues
- Transparency and forthrightness about decision-making
- Celebration of accomplishments

Communicate with your administration
- Accomplishments – collective and individual
- Student traffic
- Needs and trends
- Challenges and possible solutions

Communication strategies

- Listen to your students and staff
- Keep students in the loop
- Keep staff and administration informed
Implementing the strategies: Program design and revision

Meet student needs and affect outcomes
Design and revision

Program design
- Student satisfaction attitude
- Learner-centered
- Customer service to avoid “shuffle” and increase connection
- Good business practices
- Grounded in student development theory and those previously listed
- Sufficient to exceptional outcomes for resources
- Keeping needs at center of planning
Meet student needs and affect outcomes
Design and revision
National best practices
- FYE and SYE
- NACADA
- Supplemental or intrusive advising for selected groups (undecided, under-represented, pre-professional, etc.)
- Academic support programming
- Mentoring
- Other

Meet student needs and affect outcomes
Design and revision
Students want
- Attention, relationship, accurate advice, accessibility, connection vs. referral
- Advisor time (usually 30 minutes to one hour)
- Efficient service with appointment scheduling, fact-based info and forms
- Help to solve academic problems
- Online tools
- Timely assistance
- Encouragement
Revise processes and redesign programs
Design and revision

• Redesign programs to build student engagement
• Eliminate “one size fits all” thinking
• Revise processes to grow student satisfaction
• Evaluate policies designed more for the “good” of the institution than the student
• Ensure that consequences are not inappropriately punitive or inhibit educational outcomes

Recent UC process and program changes

• More technological resources for students to access fact-based information
• More technological resources for advisors
• Creation of advising resource center
• Newly re-organized staff structure
• Transfer orientation restructured
• Addition of more advisors
Avoid program and process mistakes
Design and revision

• Insisting on learning “the hard way”
• Avoiding what students say they need and want
• Ineffectively meeting needs
• Under-resourcing + over-demanding
• Wrong advising structure for the context

Design and revision strategies

• Design intentionally to meet student needs and affect outcomes
• Revise processes and redesign programs
• Avoid common program and process mistakes
Implementing the strategies: Effective leadership

Lead with intention
Effective leadership

Qualities and skills
• Advocacy
• Grant writing
• Data fluency
• Transparent communication
• Future vision
• Consistent, but situational decision-making

Practices
• Be present
• Know staff personally
• Know leadership style and address shortcomings
• Set priorities, values, tone and example
• Celebrate accomplishments
• High tech + high touch
• Stay the course and know that change will be a constant
• Keep focus on education (not services as end product)
Envision and plan for the future
Effective leadership

- Be a curious scholar
- Generate campus discussion about responding to changing landscape
- DREAM BIG! Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals (BHAGs)

Effective leadership strategies

- Lead with intention
- Envision and plan for the future
Final thought

- Your actions and decisions as a result of having this information could create an incalculable impact across the entire lives of many people that you currently think of as “your students.”

Contact information

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Center for Exploratory Studies (www.uc.edu/explore) and
McMicken College of Arts and Sciences (www.artsci.uc.edu)
Question/Answer Session

Moderator
Diana McGregor Fulkerson, senior consultant

To submit questions via Web
To submit questions via phone

To submit questions via telephone during the Q&A period:
Press *1 on your telephone keypad as the operator instructs you to.

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Webinar 3:
Strategies for Using Academic Advising to Enhance Retention and Student Engagement

At the conclusion of the Webinar, we invite you to dial 800-728-4700 for a one-on-one discussion of campus questions with a Noel-Levitz advising resource.