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Strengths Based Advising By: Mickey Freeze



At the Annual NACADA Conference in Orlando, Florida, I attended one session titled, *Not Just in Fantasyland: Strengths-based Small Group Advising for Probation Students*. Eric Rosenthal and Larry Lasko from Harper College in Illinois presented the session and emphasized the need to focus on students' strengths instead of their weaknesses. The strengths based advising approach that they emphasized involves questioning strategies and goal planning with students based on bringing out the things that students do well. Strengths based advising helps students choose courses and career paths based on students recognizing and utilizing their strengths.

Dr. Laurie Schreiner of Azusa Pacific University in California emphasizes the key steps and questions in strengths based advising. The key steps include the following:

- *Identify students' strengths and talents.
- *Affirm their strengths. Help students become more aware of their strengths.
- *Envision the future by discussing their goals and how strengths can be used to reach their goals.
- *Plan steps to reach their goals.
- *Apply strengths. Help students identify skills and knowledge they need to add in order to develop their strengths. (Schreiner 2007)

For each step in strengths based advising, there are specific questions that can be asked to students. Dr. Laurie Schreiner mentions the following types of questions to ask students in order to help them identify their strengths.

- *What is easy for you to do?
- *What are your interests?
- *What are your favorite activities?
- *Describe a time when you were "in the zone" doing well and enjoying yourself.
- *Describe an accomplishment that makes you proud.

*Describe a time that you overcome a challenge and how you overcome it.

*What compliments are given to you by others. (Schreiner 2007)

While it is important for us to be aware of our weaknesses and shortcomings, we need to become increasingly aware of our strengths and talents in order to succeed at a higher level. As we advise students, the strengths based advising approach can help students in all facets of life.

References:

Schreiner, Laurie. "Strengths Based Advising." StrengthsQuest. (August 2007) <https://www.strengthsquest.com/content/111376/StrengthsBased-Advising.aspx>

http://www.apu.edu/strengthsacademy/downloads/strengths_based_advising_handout.pdf

Digging Deeper By: Paige Holloway



Getting to know students is key to the advising process and to their success. Often first-time students are nervous and unsure of what is expected or required of them. That first meeting may set the tone of their academic careers, and also facilitate in building a positive relationship between the college and students. Taking a little time to explore interests and personal lives can mean the difference between completion and withdrawal, or worse, failing. Work schedules, transportation, families, as well as, interests and discipline play significant roles in their accomplishments. Understanding these factors can positively influence performance and attitude. Although, time constraints often make it difficult to dig a little deeper, doing so proves beneficial in the long run. They leave more knowledgeable and confident about their choices and also about our services.

Motivation By: Mickey Freeze

The following is a personal story of motivation told by John Wick, who works as a Counselor at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury, Connecticut.

“When a teen, I worked for my father in his small grocery store. I was taking care of the produce department. When I had filled the display case, I took the overstock to the basement to store it in a cooler. Problem was, I couldn't fit everything in the cooler. I came up to report that everything was put away except a crate of cabbage that didn't fit. He said, “If I gave you \$50 to do it, could you get that cabbage in that cooler?” I immediately realized that he wasn't going to solve the problem. He was reminding me that if it was important enough, if the stakes were high enough for me, I could do it. And I rearranged everything and put the cabbage away.” (John Wick, *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*, comment posted February 6, 2003)

We can be so close to accomplishing certain goals, but something gets in the way. How do we solve problems? Also, how do we teach and motivate students to overcome obstacles? Sometimes we can help others more by teaching them how to accomplish tasks on their own. If the person knows the importance of completing the task, that can be the motivation needed to accomplish it.

References

The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal, <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/foru0302.htm>

What are the Elements of Academic Advising? By: Candace Jeffery



Academic advising was once almost exclusively a faculty function. However, today academic advising is moving forward as a specialization within the higher education community. While faculty members remain in a role as academic advisor, advising has emerged as an area of expertise in and of itself. I had the opportunity to attend NACADA's (National Academic Advising Association) Annual Conference in Orlando. I was a little overwhelmed but came home with a wealth of knowledge that will be beneficial to me as an academic advisor.

What are our roles as academic advisors.....OR, what SHOULD our roles

be? Academic advising is more than scheduling courses for our students. The goal of an advisor should be to enhance the educational development of students. How can we reach this goal? Research shows that one of the most, if not the most, important factor in student retention is a good student/advisor relationship. A relationship that is based on collaboration, learning, growth, sharing, decision-making, and maximizing communication

Regardless of institutional specifics, the essential elements of academic advising remain the same. Academic advising:

- * Is both a learning and growth process that takes place over time and progresses through different stages.

- * Multidimensional and responds to different needs, different motivations, different levels of support, and different methods of delivery.

- * Focuses on student support and success and recognizes students' individual differences with regard to level of ability and preparation in relation to institutional

expectations and standards.

- * Provides guidance for academic decisions and effective learning activities.

And the list goes on and on. These few basic elements should give an idea of the direction we need to be headed with our advising relationships with our students. We should all approach academic advising as a teaching/learning process, and we should all recognize and incorporate a common set of essential elements into our advising process.

