

Be Advised!

A Newsletter for UMD Faculty Advisors

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

NOVEMBER, 2007

“Effective retention programs have come to understand that academic advising is the very core of successful institutional efforts to educate and retain students.”

Tinto, Vincent. (1987). Increasing student retention. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

A Few Minutes for a Lasting Impression

Many UMD faculty advisors have received notes, emails, or a passing, “Thanks”. Those same faculty advisors have probably wondered about the value of time spent being a faculty advisor. Paul Sharp, Chair of the Political Science Department in the College of Liberal Arts, recently shared an email from a student that affirms the value of faculty advising efforts. With the former advisee’s permission, here is the memo, dated Friday, August 17, 2007.

Mr. Sharp:

I was just checking the Staff and I found you were still on board at UMD. I was a student of yours during the period from 1988-1991. I am writing just to tell you that I still speak of you. Specifically it was in regard to my choice of major. You were my advisor. I believe it would have been around the 89-90 year. You were the first and only person in an advisory position that ever stopped me and

asked me what it was I was doing. At the time I was going to major in Political Science.

When I met with you, you began to ask me a series of questions. I remember you asked me if I was a part of any political campaigns. To which I replied, “no”. You asked me if I was a member of any party, to which I replied, “no”. The list went on. Then you said to me “Look I am not trying to be a jerk or anything, I am just trying to figure out why you are majoring in Political Science”. That was the first and only time that anyone had ever stopped me. I bring this up because you actually made a huge impression on me. It was the first time that I really thought about what I was doing. It is for that reason that I have always owed you a debt of gratitude.

I majored in History and I now work in the I.T. field. I am sure you can see the direct correlation between History and Informa-

tion Technology. I just wanted to let you know that in my life you did actually make a difference. I still re-lay the experience to many folks, including my daughter who is about to start college next year. . . .

My hobby right now has been doing research. . . . I am studying politics. I have actually been writing something. . . . I mention this because I am putting things I learned in college to work.

Well, I will end it here, like I said, I just wanted to thank you for something you did many years ago. Your interest made a big impression on me.

Regards.

If you have an email or memo that exemplifies the power of the advisor/advisee relationship, please share it with us. Memos like this remind us of the importance of faculty advising. Email kroufs@d.umn.edu.

Theoretical Foundations in Advising

With full appointment books, faculty advisors rarely have time to think about theory, much less practice it. Crookston and O'Banion, marginality and mattering, 7 vectors of development, student subcultures, and observations on advising styles do not seem to have much to do with students when the line outside the office is getting longer. However, advisors who understand theory can challenge themselves and tailor their own styles to meet the needs of their advisees.

Does theory matter? Does mattering matter? Does being familiar with theory make for a better advisor? The answers are yes, yes, and yes.

Academic advising without some understanding of theory easily becomes a tedious exercise in schedule planning. Although theory gives no guarantee that the advisor will know how to respond properly to an advisee, knowledge of theory provides: the framework for advisors to guide their practices and to construct appropriate responses to advisees; a means of assessing where students are developmentally, enabling advisors to guide advisees in their growth; and the context for a broader understanding of advisees as developing adults.

Theory builds the bridge between simply telling a student which classes to take and guiding a student toward decisions that have lifelong effects.

Understanding the historical context for the theories behind current perspectives on developmental advising helps advisors place advising in a larger framework. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, enrollments were falling, students were asking for direction, and higher education administrators began to take notice of the power of good academic advising.

In 1970, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1972) recognized that institutions of higher education should integrate advising into the academic experience. Thus began the development

of academic advising as it is known today.

Developmental Advising per Crookston and O'Banion

In the early 1970s, two influential scholars, Burns Crookston and Terry O'Banion, expanded the definition of advising. Crookston created a broader definition: "Developmental counseling or advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavior awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills" (1972).

Not quite so daunting was the model of O'Banion (1972), who defined advising as a top-down regression:

exploration of life goals
vocational goals
program choice
course choice, and
class schedule.

In this model, the advising process begins with the larger questions about life goals and values. As the advisee identifies important life goals and values, s/he is free to concentrate on vocational and career goals.

As the advisee clarifies the career goals, the focus continues to narrow, moving toward the major and, finally, the class schedule. A common symbol for O'Banion's model is a funnel, with life goals at the top and scheduling the courses at the bottom. O'Banion's model sets the stage for further development of advising theory.

Schlossberg's Theories of Mattering and Marginality

In 1989, Nancy Schlossberg developed a theory with which advisors should be familiar: the theory of mattering and marginality.

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Graduation Planner Launched October 1, 2007



Since the launch, 1752 Graduation Plans have been created at UMD. This is remarkable considering UMD is just beginning to introduce it to freshman in SSP 1000 (Introduction to College Learning) and the software has only been live for about a month. For those unfamiliar with the Graduation Planner, it is an easy, web-based tool designed to address the “What classes do I need to take to graduate, and when do I need to take them” questions.

This revolutionary tool puts all the degree-planning tools at the fingertips of students by pulling in course requirements and degree audit information with just a one click of the mouse. As advisers you have the ability to view plans and comment on them, or request that plans be brought to an advising session, leaving more time for discussions

about students’ lives and career paths.

Some things to keep in mind:

Data: Graduation Planner pulls all its information from existing databases and does not create new data. The “What Do I Need?” list pulls from the student APAS (Academic Progress Audit System) report. The term a course is typically offered pulls from the ECAS system (Electronic Course Applicability System), and course sequencing comes from the PCAS system (Program and Curriculum Approval System).

Browsers: recommended browsers are IE 7.0, Firefox 2.0, and Safari. View the grad planner at <http://plan.umn.edu/>.

What are people saying about the Graduation Planner?

“This is the coolest thing ever.” Theatre ICL student.

“As I see it, grad planner is the upper division papers of the 21st century. The big difference is that most students will begin this process sooner rather than later. I think with grad planner students can visualize how to get there from here, the entire of their college career, academically.” John Hamlin, Associate Professor, Sociology-Anthropology, CLA.

“Graduation Planner is one of the most efficient tools developed for students on this campus. It truly can be the catalyst for students to feel 'empowered' about making decisions with regard to their academic career.” Pat Dennis, Associate Professor, Theatre Department, SFA.

For more information on the Graduation Planner, contact Lisa Reeves at lreeves@d.umn.edu/.

Contributed by Lisa Reeves

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By applying Schlossberg’s theory to advisees, the advisor recognizes the discomfort some students experience about their place within the academy; students become marginalized if they do not believe they matter to an individual or a group; the “disconnect” begins.

When students believe that they matter, confidence replaces feelings of marginality. As simple and straightforward as this theory is, Schlossberg’s research shows that mattering matters. For a successful academic experience, students must feel they matter to someone or some group. Schloss-

berg’s work supports that of other theorists who state that disengagement leads to student departure from the institution. Therefore, for advisors, advisees must matter.

An advisor can easily apply Schlossberg’s theory by practicing good relational skills. The advisor should focus on the advisee, welcome and listen to the advisee, be patient, be comfortable with silence, and be relaxed. As the relationship develops, the advisor lets the advisee know that ideas matter, questions matter, initiatives matter, and the advisor’s relationship with the advisee matters. The advisor needs simply to remember that each student needs to believe s/he matters.



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The mission of the Advisement Coordination Center (ACC) is to coordinate, support, and be a resource to a campus wide developmental advising program. The ACC collaborates with the collegiate Student Affairs Offices that provide faculty members with the information and resources to help students develop sound educational, professional, and life goals.

The Advisement Coordination Center supplements and supports the University of Minnesota Duluth's faculty advising initiatives.

The Advisement Coordination Center provides walk-in access for any student.

UMD's Class of 2011 Profile

According to Beth Esselstrom, Director of Admissions, UMD enrolled its largest ever freshman class of 2,240 students in fall, 2007. This class was almost evenly split by gender, favoring females by three students.

Six and a half percent of our freshmen are students of color, up one and a half percent over fall 2006. Over forty-seven percent of the freshmen come from the Twin Cities metropolitan area, up two percent from fall 2006, with another eleven percent from the Arrowhead region, including Duluth. Over ten percent come from Wisconsin, and one percent are international students.

Eighty-four percent of our freshmen graduated in the top half of their high school class. The average high school rank is 69.6, the average ACT composite score is 23.3, and the average high school GPA in college preparatory courses is 3.3.

Thoughts to ponder . . . from Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants ©2001 Marc Prensky

"What should we call these 'new' students of today? Some refer to them as the N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. But the most useful designation I have found for them is **Digital Natives**. Our students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet."

"So what does that make the rest of us? Those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and always will be . . . **Digital Immigrants**."

"The importance of the distinction is this: As Digital Immigrants learn – like all immigrants, some better than others – to adapt to their environment, they always retain, to some degree, their 'accent,' that is, their foot in the past. The 'digital immigrant accent' can be seen in such things as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first, or in reading the manual for a program rather than assuming that the program itself will teach us to use it. Today's older folk were 'socialized' differently from their kids, and are now in the process of learning a new language. And a language learned later in life, scientists tell us, goes into a different part of the brain."

"There are hundreds of examples of the digital immigrant accent. They include . . . needing to print out a document written on the computer in order to edit it (rather than just editing on the screen); and bringing people physically into your office to see an interesting web site (rather than just sending them the URL). I'm sure you can think of one or two examples of your own without much effort. My own favorite example is the 'Did you get my email?' phone call. Those of us who are Digital Immigrants can, and should, laugh at ourselves and our 'accent.'"

"But this is not just a joke. It's very serious, because the single biggest problem facing education today is that our **Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.**"

How does this impact teaching and advising? Prensky suggests that the Digital Natives are masters at accessing information. Our challenge, as teachers and advisors, is to teach them how to critically process the information they so easily retrieve.

For more information, go to www.d.umn.edu/advising/ . Marc Prensky's articles and information are under Faculty and Staff: Advising Resources.