



# WHAT MATTERS TO ADULT LEARNERS: BEST PRACTICES IN ADVISING

---

ACHE Annual Conference  
Orlando, Florida  
Friday, October 14, 2011  
10 am-Noon



# Our presentation

- Competence among advisors
- Growth for students
- Connection between student and advisor

# Our presentation

In surveys of adult learners, academic and career advising is listed as one of the most important factors in student success and satisfaction.

This workshop will:

- Review the research on best practices
- Engage with a panel of successful advisors who work with adult undergraduate students
- Provide opportunities for participant interaction

## Panel topics: How to. . .

- Support higher levels of persistence to the degree
- Prevent and recover stop-outs
- Connect adult students' career needs with their academic planning
- Achieve successful mechanisms for new student success
- Build successful partnerships between advisors and faculty leaders to construct course schedules that meet student needs
- Enable students to make the most effective use of advisor's time
- Promote prior learning assessment to support greater persistence

## Our panel

- Liz Glodek – Director & Academic Advisor, Indianola campus, Simpson College
- Rosemary Link – Associate Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Simpson College
- Walter Pearson – Dean, Lewis University School for Professional and Continuing Education
- Craig Peck – Director & Academic Advisor, Ankeny campus, Simpson College

*Thank you to Andrea Biklen, Director & Academic Advisor,  
West Des Moines campus, Simpson College,  
who teamed with us in planning*

# Your relationship to advising

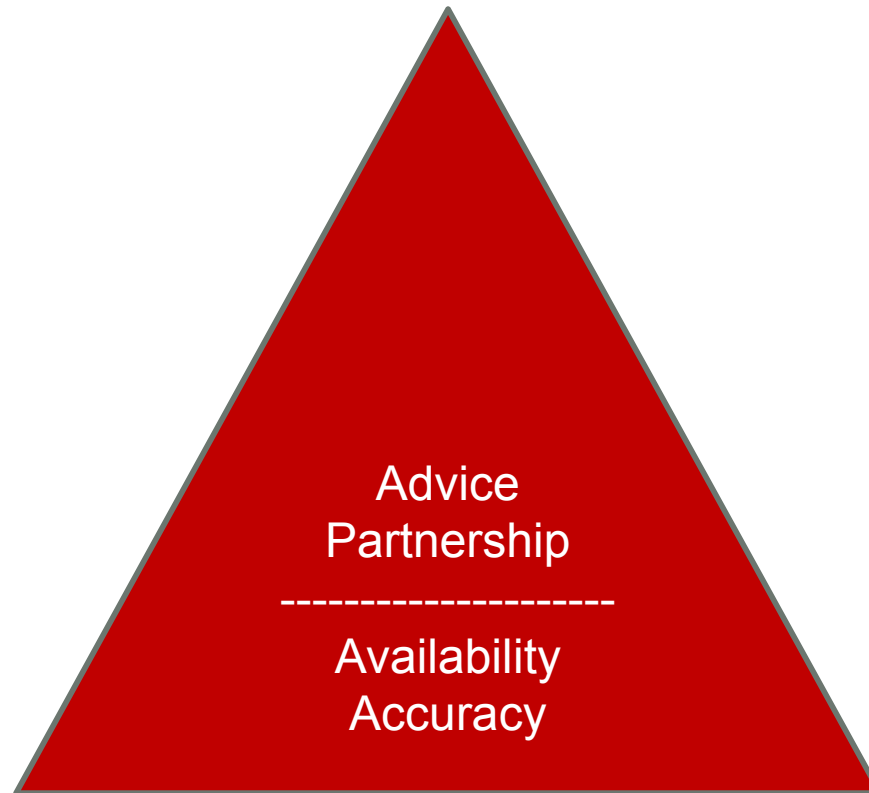
- Advisor?
- Faculty with advising responsibilities?
- Supervise advisors?
- Other?



## What matters to adult students?

- Quality/respected degree
- Convenient and accessible
- Flexible
- Affordable
- Welcoming/safe

# Expectations for the advising relationship



# The importance of advising

Noel-Levitz Adult Student Priorities survey –  
91,000 students at 218 institutions

<b>Undergraduate adult students</b>	<b>Importance</b>	<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>Gap</b>
Instructional Effectiveness	6.48	5.74	0.74
Academic Advising	6.44	5.61	0.83
Registration Effectiveness	6.40	5.61	0.79
Campus Climate	6.39	5.62	0.77
Service Excellence	6.34	5.39	0.95
Admissions and Financial Aid	6.34	5.42	0.92
Academic Services	6.20	5.37	0.83
Safety and Security	6.19	5.49	0.70

# What is important within advising?

Advising questions	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
Major requirements are clear and reasonable.	6.60	5.81	0.79
My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.	6.50	5.73	0.77
When students enroll at this institution, they develop a plan to complete their degree.	6.44	5.61	0.83
My academic advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.	6.41	5.81	0.60
My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.	6.32	5.46	0.86
My advisor helps me apply my academic major to specific career goals.	6.31	5.15	1.16
My academic advisor is available at times that are convenient for me.	6.25	5.50	0.75
<b>Average</b>	<b>6.40</b>	<b>5.58</b>	<b>0.82</b>

# Competence, growth, connection

## **Competence**

- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
  - My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.
- 

## **Growth**

- When students enroll at this institution, they develop a plan to complete their degree.
  - My advisor helps me apply my academic major to specific career goals.
- 

## **Connection**

- My academic advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.
  - My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.
  - My academic advisor is available at times that are convenient for me.
-

# Competence

- The complications of transfer advising
- Capturing all the rules and exceptions
- Relationships with the registrar and other academic leaders
- Use of worksheets and data reports
- Communication
- Class scheduling
- Fountain of university/college information
- Liaison between the student and the college

# Competence

- Navigating and communicating academic requirements
  - “Making sure I don't take a class that won't count toward my degree”
  - Handling exceptions
- Follow-up process
  - Reminder of deadlines
  - Preventing problems before they happen
  - Card and calls to unregistered students from prior term
  - Tracking for graduation applications with degree audit

## Competence: Course scheduling with students

Course scheduling and planning: “What” as well as “who”

- He has given me excellent advice on teachers and classes to take. Really has a good understanding of me and the classes that I need to take.
- He's offered insight as far as what specific courses entail and which instructors might best suit me.
- She is great in picking classes that will complement each other and not overwhelm me to the point I get frustrated. Her advice has always been useful and always turns out to be true!
- Skilled at mapping (from the student's view later)

## Competence: Course scheduling with faculty

- Successful partnership between advisors and faculty leaders to construct course schedules that meet student needs
- Short overview meetings with chairs: “Speed dating”
- Building a two-way exchange
- Keeping an eye open for innovation

# Competence: Cultural awareness

Advisors truly value diversity and:

- Can identify their own cultural identity and history
- Are knowledgeable about customs, holy/fast days, styles of students attending (YMCA; YMHA; Red Cross; Red Crescent)
- Avoid saying, “I treat everyone the same”
- Respect differences: anticipate a variety of communication styles (high/low context)
- Pay attention to college environment/images/art/signage
- Address tension: Wilmar MN, police learning Spanish

# Competence: Communication

Be a role model for effective communication:

- Being on time, calm, with a genuine greeting
- Putting phone/distractions on hold
- Focusing on the conversation
- Using a variety of response techniques and follow-up
- Clarifying understanding
- Acknowledging language preference, cultural style



## Discussion

- How do we increase the competence of advisors?
- What sort of training do you provide at your campus?

# Growth

- Coming up with a plan
  - Goal formation and clarity
  - A degree “map,” i.e., the plan to complete the degree – course cycles, prerequisites, planning worksheets
- Understanding the developmental needs of adult students
- Building relationships
- Connecting career needs with academic planning
- Supporting greater persistence



# Growth: Coming up with a plan

- Goal formation and clarity
  - Why are you here?
  - What is your career goal?
  - How will this course affect your goals?



### Pre-Advising Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Instructions:

In order to make your upcoming advising appointment as productive as possible, please complete this questionnaire in its entirety prior to meeting with your advisor. If possible, email the completed questionnaire back to your advisor prior to your meeting.

Before beginning, print out a copy of your degree audit as you may find it helpful as you complete this form. Bring both the questionnaire and your degree audit to your appointment.

Your degree audit can be found through your stormfront account: <https://stormfront.simpson.edu>.

#### Primary Purpose of the Advising Meeting: (check all that apply)

- Course Scheduling
- Change of Major/Minor
- Writing Competency II Portfolio
- Graduation Application
- Help with Academic Form Please note if known: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Course Scheduling:

If course scheduling will be part of the advising agenda please take the time to review your remaining requirements (see degree audit) and the schedule of upcoming courses. Access the most current course schedule through your stormfront account: <https://stormfront.simpson.edu>

Based upon a review of your degree audit and remaining requirements, what are some of the courses you need to consider taking in the next term/semester/year?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

If you are unsure about any unmet requirements that appear on your degree audit, please address these with your advisor at the time of your appointment (add to the agenda at the end of this questionnaire).



#### Graduation Preparation:

Complete these questions if you have currently earned **90 credits or more** and/or plan to finish all remaining requirements within the next 12 months.

Have you met or do you have a plan to meet all remaining department requirements for your degree program?  Yes  No  Unsure

Have you met or do you have a plan to meet all remaining general Simpson College catalog and graduation requirements?  Yes  No  Unsure

Have you submitted your graduation application?  Yes  No  Unsure

If submitted, have you received your Graduation Application Analysis back from the Registrar's Office?  Yes  No  Unsure

If you are unsure about any of the above, please add these items to the meeting agenda below.

#### Agenda:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. All that is left is for you to create a final agenda for your advising meeting. Include any items checked on page one, items about which you have indicated some uncertainty, and any other topics/issues you would like to discuss with your advisor.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Notes:

##### Helpful Simpson College Websites

- College Catalog and Course Descriptions: <http://www.simpson.edu/courses>
- Academic Calendar: <http://www.simpson.edu/academics/calendar>
- Academic Policies: <http://www.simpson.edu/academics/policies/index.html>
- Academic Forms: <http://www.simpson.edu/registrar/forms.html>
- Writing Competency II Portfolio: [www.simpson.edu/hawley/writing/portfolio.html](http://www.simpson.edu/hawley/writing/portfolio.html)
- Scholar: <http://scholar.simpson.edu/moodle>
- Library Resources: <http://www.simpson.edu/library>
- Bookstore: <http://www.simpson.edu/bookstore>

# Growth: Coming up with a plan

## A degree “map”

“...should sequence the courses specific to each program of study and be linked to clear and reliable estimates of the time required to earn a degree.”

- *Lumina Foundation for Education, Inc., 2007*

Advisor Initials:

# SCHEDULING WORKSHEET

Date:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ HS & Date of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

### Fall Term 1

(Late Aug-Mid Oct)

Day Course Code - Section


### Fall Term 2

(Mid Oct-Mid Dec)

Day Course Code - Section


### Spring Term 3

(Early Jan-Mid Feb)

Day Course Code - Section


### Spring Term 4

(Early Mar-Late April)

Day Course Code - Section


### Fall Semester

(Late Aug-Mid Dec)

Day Course Code - Section


### Spring Semester

(Early Jan-Late Apr)

Day Course Code - Section


### Summer Session 1

(Mid May-Mid June)

Day Course Code - Section


### Summer Session 2

(Early July-Mid Aug)

Day Course Code - Section


### Sumer Cross Session

(Mid May-Mid Aug)

Day Course Code - Section


Notes:

---



---



---



---



---



---

## DEGREE PLAN

### **Year Two**

Engaged Citizenship Curriculum  
Areas of Engagement:

---

Embedded Skills:

Major Requirements:

### **Year Three**

Engaged Citizenship Curriculum  
Areas of Engagement:

---

Embedded Skills:

Major Requirements:

### **Year Four**

Engaged Citizenship Curriculum  
Areas of Engagement:

---

Embedded Skills:

Major Requirements:

# Growth: Understanding the developmental needs of adult students

## **Process** – Do adults think differently?

- Self-concept
- Experience
- Readiness to learn
- Orientation to learning
- Motivation to learn

– *Reproduced from an article by Mark J. Smith, 1999, from the encyclopedia of informal education [www.infed.org]*

# Growth: Understanding the developmental needs of adult students

- **Situations** – Do adults find themselves in different circumstances compared to other age groups?
  - How do these circumstances inform decisions they make regarding their education?
- **Experiences** – Does the accumulation of experience change things?
  - What difference does it make to have been through a greater range of experiences?

*– Reproduced from an article by Mark J. Smith, 1999, from the encyclopedia of informal education [www.infed.org]*



## Discussion

- How do these differences show up in our professional practice?

# Growth: Building relationships

Help your students make connections on your campus:

- Their faculty
- Campus Career Services Center
- Student groups and alumni
- Each other
- You
  - “He listened and helped plan with personal insight. It helped to bring all my jumbled ideas together to form a plan. I was very pleased with my advising session. Just enough pushing and letting me think.”

## Growth: Connecting career needs with academic planning

“Utilizing Career Services effectively can be a life saver to the adult (learner). . . .The job search and application processes, as well as the skills needed to be marketable, have changed significantly. . . .the adult learner who takes advantage of the services available on campus and who is open to change will be at an advantage in the job market.”

— *Jennifer del Pino, Director, Career Services, Simpson College*

## Career is a “gap” area

Advising questions	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
My advisor helps me apply my academic major to specific career goals.	6.31	5.15	1.16
Average	6.40	5.58	0.82

# Growth: Connecting career needs with academic planning

Work with campus office of Career Services to develop workshops for your students:

- Career paths/development
  - What kind of work do your students want to do?
  - How can they articulate what they are studying or skills they are learning to a potential employer?
- Employment or re-employment
  - Résumé & cover letter review
  - Interviewing techniques/mock interviews
  - Job search methods

# Growth: Connecting career needs with academic planning

The following handouts are available:

- Simpson College's Office of Career Services
  - Four-Phase Plan
- St. Edward's University Career Services
  - Signature Programs in Career Services
  - Career Change, Career Transition Presentation
- Des Moines Area Community College
  - Workforce Training Academy
- What is working for you?



## Discussion

- How would you describe a well-connected relationship with one of your advisees?
- What does it mean to “be connected” with our advisees?

# Early strategies for establishing connections: First meeting

- First meeting – joining with your advisees
  - Be personable, be professional, be purposeful.
  - Show interest and minimize distractions.
  - Take as much time as needed and allow for questions.
  - Let your passion and enthusiasm show.
  - Record relevant information in session notes.
  - Be well prepared for questions.
    - Costs
    - Graduation rates
    - Why your school and not \_\_\_\_\_
- Follow-up
  - Email same day of meeting

# Early strategies for establishing connections: First class and term

- First night of class
  - Check in prior to first night.
    - First-term binder
  - Be available to greet your advisees as they arrive .
  - Know your advisees by name.
  - Don't forget the passion and enthusiasm 😊
- First term
  - Check in on occasion.
    - Drop/add date
  - Reach out to advisees not attending.
  - Make an end-of-term phone call.
  - Review grades and make contact if necessary.

# Staying connected

- Contacts with advisees
  - Regular, systematic
  - Combination of email and phone and face-to-face
  - Personal appointments at branch campuses
- Responsiveness to advisees
  - Returning calls promptly
  - Emailing back even if no answer yet
  - Tools to keep track: One Note, Outlook
- Extended office hours and flexibility
  - Dropping in – geography of the campus, open period before class
  - Evening and weekend hours

# Staying connected

- Enabling students to make the most effective use of advisor's time
  - Make confirmation calls.
  - Get ready for your appointment: the pre-advising questionnaire.
  - Devote time to advisees and give them your full attention.
  - Summarize the meeting.
  - Follow through and follow up.
- Helping students through major life issues
  - Establish boundaries.
  - Be familiar with campus/community resources.
  - Advocate for your advisees.

# Connecting at critical times

- Changes in policy/procedure
- Curricular changes
- Approaching deadlines
  - Portfolio submission
  - Incomplete deadlines
  - Graduation applications
- Attendance issues/poor grades
- Stop-outs
- Praising accomplishments

# Connection

- Availability: Office hours, locations
- Effective use of technology
- Office environments and body language
- Personal connection
  - Congratulations
  - Outreach – first term and beyond
  - Helping even when not asked
  - Stop-outs
- Listen, care, advocate, motivate
- Appreciate and support diversity
- Trusting atmosphere for the student
- Building family support
- Outside issues

# Connection: Why outreach?

	Have met, N=331		Have not met, N=45	
	Expect	Satisfaction	Expect	Satisfaction
Explain degree requirements, majors & cornerstones	76%	100%	58%	38%
Suggest schedule options	73%	100%	64%	28%
Determine prerequisites	65%	98%	51%	30%
Explain graduation procedures	64%	48%	38%	24%
Evaluate transcripts	64%	95%	40%	39%
Advise on college procedures	63%	80%	47%	29%
Help construct a 2 - 3 year course plan	62%	53%	47%	19%
Select courses	62%	100%	56%	32%
Help me understand Life Experience Portfolio	53%	57%	38%	29%
Explain non-traditional credit opportunities	53%	70%	47%	29%
Phone registration	53%	100%	42%	74%
Support and Encouragement	50%	93%	38%	41%
Advise on writing competency	49%	58%	33%	27%
Help resolve problems with instructors	47%	49%	40%	22%
Advise on financial assistance	46%	72%	33%	33%
Help in choosing a major	37%	94%	33%	13%
Help me with anxieties about returning to school	31%	97%	31%	29%
Help me handle absences and still meet requirements	30%	62%	36%	13%
Help me stay in touch with other adult students	21%	70%	33%	20%
Assist with my time management	21%	79%	24%	27%

## Connection: Outreach tactics

- Surveys
- E-newsletters
- Open houses
- Special events
- Others?

## Wrap-up and takeaways

With a partner, please discuss:

- What is on your checklist for best practices in advising?
- What are the major challenges for you in staying connected with your advisees?
- Identify your top 4 strategies in connecting with adult learners.
- How do “I revitalize myself” in order to be fully present and to role model “self-efficacy?”
- What stands out? What will I remember from today?

# Comments

- Online students – feel that regardless of being online or hybrid, high touch points are important.
- Email is the primary point of contact.
- Scheduling Worksheet – how does the financial aid affect the course plan. Build the aid in the plan so they understand what the implications might be if they add or take a class away from their plan.
- Where do you draw the line? When is it their responsibility? Advisors can't fix everything.
- Have official transcripts in hand; evaluated by Registrar's office before initial advising appointment.
- Remember what the adult learner's needs are.