

A Vision for Academic Advising at UVM

Philosophical Bases

The key tenet for an effective system of advising is *shared responsibility*. A student is ultimately responsible for the choices he or she makes in college, but in order to make informed decisions, students need the mentoring and advice of academic advisors, student services staff and others in the University community. An effective system of advising ensures that the advising needs of all populations of students are addressed.

Responsibility for promoting excellent advising should rest at several levels including the central administration, Faculty Senate, the academic units, faculty and staff advisors and students. Undergraduate student advising should be assessed at the University level, the unit level and the individual faculty and staff levels, and the information gained should inform actions to improve advising.

Purposes of Academic Advising

The purposes of academic advising are to provide students with informational, developmental and integrative advice in order to:

- assist students in making the transition to college, having a rewarding college experience, planning for life after graduation, and in clarifying their goals and direction
- provide guidance to students in interpreting academic requirements, policies and practices in order to make good decisions related to their academic programs and progression
- make students aware of opportunities for academic and personal growth and development
- help students create and make use of formal and informal networks throughout the University
- connect students with on-campus resources and support services as appropriate

Definitions

Academic Advising Defined¹

“Academic advising is a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and advisor. The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career

¹ The noted considerations rely on the NACADA, Boston University, College of New Jersey, Concordia, Berry College, and other academic advising websites.

planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary” (David S. Crockett, Ed., (1987), *Advising Skills, Techniques and Resources: A Compilation of Materials Related to the Organization and Delivery of Advising Services* (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT Corporation). From Crockett’s definition we can tease out three strands of academic advising.

Informational advising is concerned with conveying and interpreting information about rules, requirements, and policies of the University. This form of advising is important and needed, but is not by itself enough for the multi-faceted student success that we are aiming for. Partly, this is because scheduling, and program and course choice depend on clarity about academic direction.

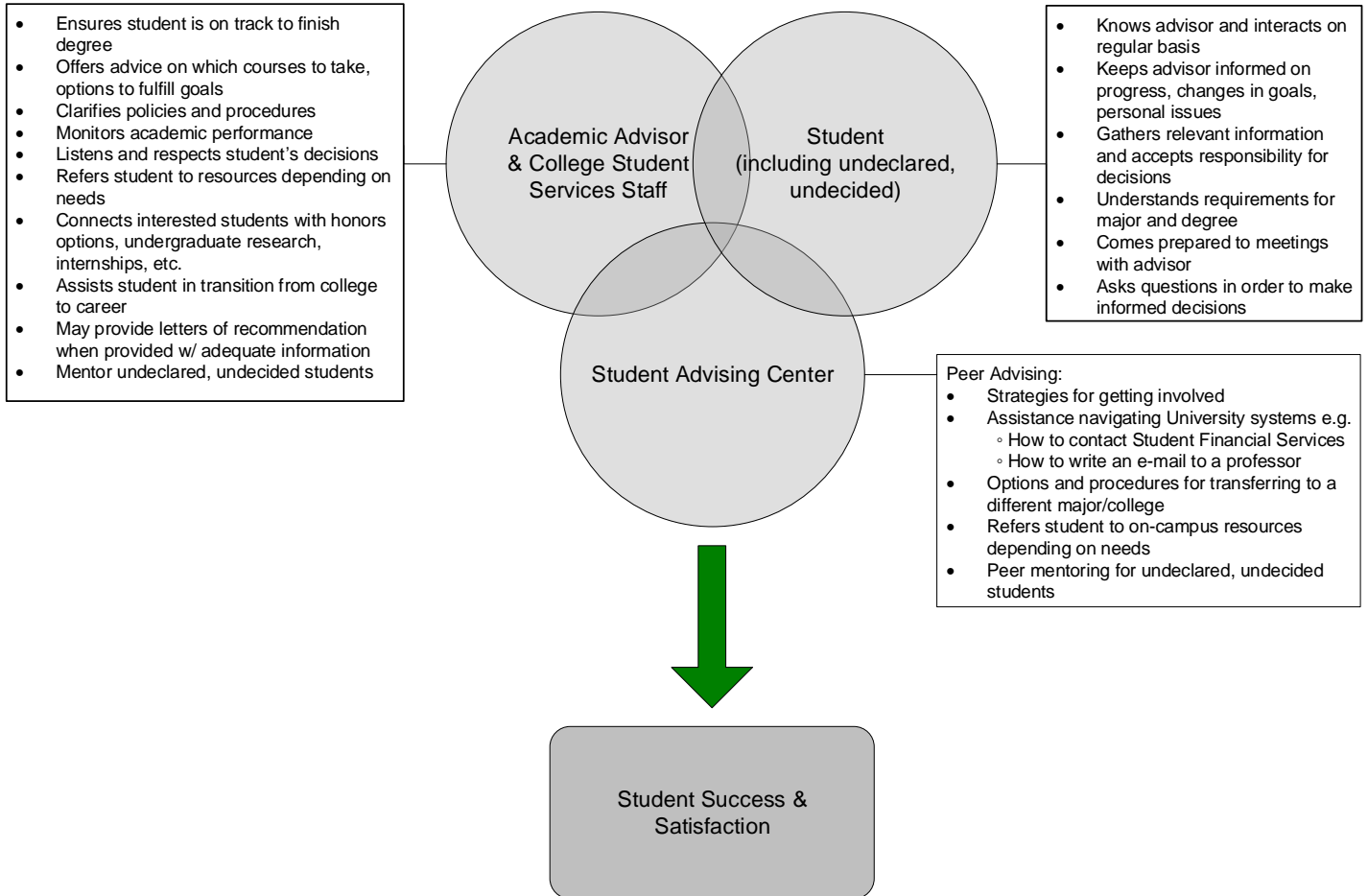
Developmental advising focuses on the evolution of life, vocational, and educational goals of the student. There needs to be sufficient clarity about these broad issues for finer-grained informational advising to be successful. Yet these matters may be unclear for students so a goal of advising is to work with the student to achieve sufficient clarity in this area. Such clarity may not arise readily and may involve exploration, reflection and integration on part of the student.

Integrative advising is the attempt to facilitate connections among the student’s courses, professors and mentors, experiences in and out of the classroom, ideas and aspirations, and practical goals. The advisor-student relationship is only one of many important relationships a student will have at the University and, ideally, the student will be able to benefit from a rich network of University connections for life-long educational, social, and career purposes. This richness reflects also the fact that no single person will have the knowledge or expertise to provide all aspects of advising for the student. Thus successful academic advising is based on the successful integration of many types of interactions and experiences leading to increased clarity about goals and plans, which will, along the way, lead to particular program and curricular choices.

Infrastructure

The vision is for a seamless, comprehensive system of student advising in which there are adequate infrastructures to support advising and where all parties understand their respective roles and responsibilities. We propose a three component model as illustrated in the diagram.

Integrated System for Academic Advising



Roles and Responsibilities

Students' Role and Responsibilities

Students must be proactive and responsible for their education. Advisors can help students understand fully all options and avoid needless mistakes only if they take the initiative to seek advice. Student responsibilities include:

- To stay informed about University policies, programs, and codes of conduct.
- To read communications from advisors, faculty members, and other University officials.
- To act on information received during individual appointments.

- To keep the UVM e-mail account current and check it regularly. Other e-mail accounts should be linked to the student's UVM e-mail and checked daily.
- To be proactive and take the initiative to contact the advisor.
 - Prepare a list of questions or concerns before each meeting with the advisor.
 - Ask specific questions about policies, procedures, requirements, etc until understood.
 - Seek sources of information that will assist in making academic and career decisions.
- To keep the advisor informed about changes in academic progress, course selection, and academic and career goals.
- To understand the student has the final responsibility to select and register for courses that meet the program plan requirements.
 - Be familiar with the requirements of the major(s) that you are pursuing, and schedule courses each semester in accordance with those requirements.
 - Be aware of the prerequisites for each course that you include in your semester schedule and discuss with your advisor how prerequisites will affect the sequencing of your courses.
 - Follow University procedures for registering courses and for making adjustments to your class schedule.
 - To comply with academic deadlines for registration, Drop/Add, course withdrawals, etc.
 - Set up appointments with the advisor well in advance of the deadlines.
- To monitor their own progress towards their degree.
 - Organize official University documents and notes from meetings in a way that enables retrieval when needed.
 - Understand academic performance standards (GPA and required courses) for continuation and graduation.
- To keep in touch.

Role and Responsibilities of Faculty Advisors

The advisor helps the student talk through issues and provides information and advice. The advisor refers the student to appropriate contacts within UVM, including advisors and faculty in other programs that the student may want to transfer to. The advisor can be an advocate for the student and provide support or a reality check when needed. Advisor responsibilities include:

- To help the student become more independent and self-directed
- To help the student assume responsibility for their decisions and actions through a mentoring relationship.
- To inform the student of program policies, procedures, and requirements.
- To clarify, interpret, and explain college policies, regulations, programs, and procedures about which the student may have questions.

- To help the student explore his/her interests, abilities, and goals and to help the student define and develop realistic educational and career plans and relate them to academic majors, including referral to Career Services. Other individuals who may help may be in Residential Life, Counseling Center and Psychiatry Services, the MOSAIC Center for Students of Color, the Office of International Education, and other areas.
- To offer advice on selecting courses and to assist the student in developing, semester by semester, an academic plan that satisfies degree requirements.
- To monitor the student's progress toward his/her educational goals.
- To discuss with the student his/her academic performance and the implications of performance for degree completion, curricular choices, and graduate programs and professional programs the student wishes to pursue.
- To help the student identify any special needs he/she might have and acquaint him/her with services and programs provided by UVM.
- To connect interested students with honors options, opportunities for undergraduate research and scholarship, and other experiential learning options.
- To be a responsive listener and to refer the student to appropriate resources within the University as necessary in cases where academic or personal problems can be helped by the intervention by other professionals.
- To assist with course adds, drops, withdrawals, and change of academic status.
- To be available to meet with the student several times each semester.
- At the advisor's discretion, to provide letters of recommendation when provided with adequate information

Role and Responsibilities of School/College Student Services Offices

Student services advisors provide and oversee advising activities within each School or College, often serving many of the roles described for faculty advisors. In addition, student services advisors work with specific populations of students such as first-year, transfer, first generation college, or those requiring assistance in areas in which faculty expertise is limited (e.g., mental health and other non-academic circumstances).

Student Services Office advisors activities also include:

- Addressing concerns raised by campus partners:
 - Collaboration with CSC (Center for Student Conduct) and follow-up
 - Follow-up on faculty concerns about students
 - Collaborating with the Assistant Dean of Students
 - Collaborating with unit academic leaders (Dean and Associate Dean(s))
- Being a responsive listener and facilitating connections so that the student may access appropriate resources within the University, as necessary (e.g., in cases where academic or personal problems can be helped by the intervention of other professionals; help

students with special needs acquaint themselves with services and programs provided by UVM).

- Providing an ongoing advising relationship with students on an individual basis as dictated by student need and situation.
- Initiating outreach to general and specific student populations. Request meetings with students as appropriate to support those whose circumstances and/or performance warrant extra attention.
- Facilitating connections so that students may explore their interests, abilities, and goals and to help them define and develop realistic educational and career plans. This may result in connecting the student to various other campus resources, such as Career Services, Residential Life, Counseling and Psychiatry Services, the MOSAIC Center for Students of Color, the Office of International Education, and other areas.
- Supporting faculty advisors by serving as a resource for addressing student academic issues that are unusually complex (e.g., cross-college or multiple degree programs) or other issues that would benefit from referral to an appropriate campus support office.