Advising Strategies that Increase the Persistence of Probationary, Underprepared, Post-traditional and Online Students

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Advising Strategies that Increase Persistence of Challenged Students

NACADA October 2016

Kristine Knutson & Glynis Bradfield
Andrews University, Michigan, USA
Mission: Andrews University, a distinctive Seventh-day Adventist institution, transforms its students by educating them to seek knowledge and affirm faith in order to change the world.

Private: Christian, Berrien Springs, SW Michigan
Small: 1,483 undergrad FTEs - Fall 2016
Retention rate: 79% (2015-16)
6-year graduation rate: 59% (2014-15)
Rich Diversity

- Ranked 2\textsuperscript{nd} for Campus Ethnic Diversity in US News and World Report for Higher Education 2015-2016
- US News 2013 ranked Andrews University 9\textsuperscript{th} for Most International Students
- IPEDS 2015 Data Feedback Report notes several demographic differences
Non-Academic Factors Impact Retention

Students who master course content but fail to develop adequate academic self-confidence, academic goals, institutional commitment, and social support and involvement may still be at risk of dropping out.

ACT Policy Report 2004

Advisors act as agents of student relationship management by building quality interpersonal relationships that improve student bonds with their institution.

Vianden, 2016. NACADA Journal 36(1)
Advising is Key

Factors that increase a student’s chances of staying on track to graduation:

- High-level of mathematics in high school
- AP/IB courses in high school
- Academic advising in college
  - Talking to an academic advisor increased persistence to graduation
  - 4-year institution students who saw their advisor “often” instead of “never” were 53% more likely to persist

Setting Up Students to Succeed, Center for Public Education (Fall 2012)
Appreciative Advising

Disarm
Make a positive first impression with the student, build rapport, and create a safe, welcoming space.

Discover
Ask positive open-ended questions that help advisers learn about students' strengths, skills, and abilities.

Dream
Inquire about students' hopes and dreams for their futures.

Design
Co-create a plan for making their dreams a reality.

Deliver
The student delivers on the plan created during the Design phase and the adviser is available to encourage and support students.

Don’t Settle
Advisers and students alike need to set their own internal bars of expectations high.
Proactive Advising

- Advising effectiveness increases when the advisor builds a relationship in which expectations for advising are set from the start. The advisor prepares for appointments that intentionally scaffold the student’s progress through asking key questions, then connecting the student with appropriate support services.

- Follow up and accessibility are core components to this strategy, with advisors being proficient and flexible in using a variety of communication tools.
Advising and Student Persistence

AT-RISK student populations:
1. Underprepared
2. Probation status
3. Distance degree
4. Students with disability accommodation

Advising Model: specialists serve specific populations with faculty advisors by program
1. Underprepared

Profile

- GPA below 2.5 or test scores below 50th percentile
- UG Success Advisor for first 2 semesters
  - Fall 2014 – dedicated advisor position
- 96% success advisees transfer to major advisor for 3rd semester (2015-16)
- Strong retention rates:
  - Fall 2014 to Fall 2015: 74%
  - Fall 2015 to Fall 2016: 91.7%
1. Underprepared

Appreciative Advising

- The UG Success Advisor develops a supportive relationship with students and parents
- Students are encouraged to start major classes providing test scores allow
- Starting with Fall 2016 cohort the Success Advisor will remain as a secondary advisor for the students’ 3rd semester as they transition fully to major advisors
1. Underprepared

Proactive Advising

- Required remedial classes
- Encouraged to seek individual tutoring
- Progress reports required from professors at week 3, mid-term, and week 11 in each term
- Early alerts by professors are closely monitored, with mandated 4th week, mid-term, and 12th week success advising appointments
1. Underprepared

Proactive Advising

- Success Advisor meets advisees during the first two weeks to complete an Academic Success Plan
- Contracts help students own their progress and build self-regulation skills
# Underprepared - Midterm Form

1. **What areas have made academic success difficult?** Indicate all that apply.
- wrong major
- computer load too heavy
- not prepared for college
- poor time management
- lack of time management skills
- class schedule too tight
- too much work
- not enough time
- other (please list)

2. In what areas below do you think you need assistance? Indicate all that are appropriate.
- Study skills
- Time management
- Other (please list)

---

**Personal Time Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I go to class and arrive to class prepared.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I review my notes within 24 hours of class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend time on campus taking care of personal business, talking with professors, studying, or doing research.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have study goals, and I achieve them each week.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel prepared for tests.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend enough time on writing assignments.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get enough sleep each night.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spend some time each week doing something I enjoy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have enough time to take care of most of my personal needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get support from others to help me meet my educational goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Score Range**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>You do a good job managing time. For the most part, you are satisfied with how you manage your time and what you accomplish each week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>You do a good job managing your time for most activities. Identify your leisure areas and create a plan to improve time management as these areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>You may be overwhelmed with your time management and find only a few goals are met each week. Review what you are doing right with some of your time and make a plan that will draw upon your time management strengths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 5</td>
<td>You may feel as though you are not meeting most of your goals during the week. An honest look at your goals, necessary activities, and priorities is needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Form inspired by www.cascadia.edu & www.uncw.edu
2. Probation Status

Profile

- Cum GPA < 2.0; semester GPA < 1.75; or 3 low grades
- Percent of students on probation declining since advising strategy change in Fall 2013

Percent of Academic Probation Students on Probation for 2 of 3 Consecutive Terms

- F11-F12: 10%
- F12-F13: 7%
- F13-F14: 9%
- F14-F15: 5%

Legend:
- 2 of 3 terms AP
- Linear (2 of 3 terms AP)
2. Probation Status

Appreciative Advising

- Uses a welcoming approach at the first meeting to “disarm” students discouraged by their lack of success
- Refers to students on probation status rather than as a probation student
- Encourages students with good grades in the past semesters and challenges them to use same tactics now
- Helps student view probation status as a slight detour from their otherwise good record
2. Probation Status

Proactive Advising

- Mandatory probation contract and paperwork meeting at beginning and at mid-term of each semester.
- Solicits professor updates on attendance at week 3, grades at mid-term, and progress report at week 12.
- Full educational assessment (psychological evaluation) is mandated when on probation status a 2\textsuperscript{nd} semester.
2. Probation Status

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Academic Probation and At-Risk Student Contract

Student Name ____________________________ Andrews ID # __________
Cell Phone ____________________________ E-Mail Address ____________________________
Contract Term CHOICE 1 CHOICE 2 CHOICE 3

- GPA: A student is considered an Academic Probation/At-Risk student when their cumulative GPA is lower than 2.00 and/or semester GPA of 1.75 or less or a combination of 3.0 or more W/Fs, Fs or grade point below 3.0 for any given semester.
- REGISTRATION AND BEGINNING THE SEMESTER: A student on Academic Probation/At-Risk must register for, and begin attending, classes on or before the third day of classes for a given semester.
- MID-TERM REVIEW: It is essential that an Academic Probation/At-Risk student makes an appointment and attends a Mid-term Review in the Student Success Center approximately 6 weeks into the term. Details will be available at the appropriate time.
- STUDENT LIFE: While on Academic Probation/Aut-Risk, students sometimes apply: Credits for the semester are limited to 12 credits (full-time status) with grades of C or above in all courses for the semester. Work load should not be less than 12 hours per week and extra-curricular activities should be limited. Referrals may be made, with follow-up, to campus support services, counseling services, and/or for assessment purposes.
- YOUR MAJOR: Contacting your academic performance must take priority over class sequencing needs of a given major. In the event that a course load is too heavy, a class may have to be dropped even though it is required for your major sequence.
- CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY: The maximum number of absences for an Academic Probation/At-Risk student: 5 credit courses – 1 absence for the full semester; 2-credit courses – 1 absence for the full semester.
- GRADE EVALUATION: The Student Success Center evaluates your semester grades for continuation, an I, W, or AU will be viewed the same as an F.
- FINANCIAL AID: Eligibility is dependent on: Achieve and maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher; Complete at least 66.67% of total credits attempted; Reducing an academic course load: less than 12 credits per semester may, provide eligibility for some financial aid. For international students, a lower academic course load may proportionally limit status. Upon entering Academic Probation the expectation is that you will succeed this semester, if not, Academic Probation will not be written.
- COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES DISMISSAL POLICY: A letter of dismissal will be issued by the College of Arts and Sciences for any of the following reasons: Failing a GPA of 1.75 or less during a given semester; Two consecutive or three total semesters on academic probation; Failure to meet Probation Student Guidelines for their personal academic probation program outlined by their dean; Displaying academic irresponsibility in matters such as academic integrity, class attendance and homework assignments.

Student Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Director of Student Success ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Parent/Guardian Name ____________________________ Phone # ____________________________
Address ____________________________

SAP
SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

INITIAL SELF-EVALUATION

Form 1

Student Name ____________________________ AU ID # ____________________________ Advisor Name ____________________________

Directions: Check the applicable boxes that describe the issues that have contributed, or are contributing to your academic difficulties. If there are reasons that are not listed, please list them. This information will be used when you meet regarding your academic plan.

ACADEMIC OR STUDY SKILL CONCERNS

Past Present
- Academic Pre-college preparation
- Important tasks not done
- Too many courses
- Test anxiety
- Trouble managing time well
- Difficulty maintaining attention in class
- Study skills (briefly describe on back)

FAMILY SITUATION OR SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Past Present
- Separation from family or friends
- Housing or roommate problems
- Difficulty making friends
- Boredom or loneliness
- Stress in family
- Death in family

EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

Past Present

TOTAL HOURS PER WEEK

MINISTRY ____________ SPORTS ____________ OTHER ____________

OTHER ISSUES OR CONCERNS

Past Present

For all current issues, what can you do to improve upon the situation(s) to ensure your academic success? Explain.

Student Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Advisor Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

I have read the above guidelines and understand them. I agree to contact my academic performance with parents/legal guardians, teachers, and academic advisor(s) when deemed appropriate.

I have read, understood, and agreed to the above.

Student Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Advisor Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
2. Probation Status

---

**SAP SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

**ACADEMIC PLAN**

Form 2

**Student Name:**
**AU ID:**
**Advisor Name:**

---

**What will happen at this appointment:**
1. You will discuss the issues that resulted in your poor academic performance (Initial Self-Evaluation).
2. You will go over your CAP (Next).
3. With the assistance of your Academic Advisor or Director of Student Success, you will create an Academic Plan that outlines your work load and credit load for the current term and any other recommendations.
4. You will schedule follow-up appointments in 8-12 weeks with your Academic Advisor or Director of Student Success via email at a date to be determined.

**WORK LOAD (hours per week):**

**Prior Semester:**
- 80-90 Hours
- 70-80 Hours
- 60-70 Hours
- 50-60 Hours
- 40-50 Hours
- Not working

**Additional Information:**

---

**Next Semester:**
- 80-90 Hours
- 70-80 Hours
- 60-70 Hours
- 50-60 Hours
- 40-50 Hours
- Not working

**Additional Information:**

---

**What program do you plan on graduating from?**

---

**After this appointment, a copy of the following items will be submitted to the Office of Student Financial Services for review:**

- Form 2 Academic Plan
- Any other documentation required by the Office of Student Financial Services for potential reinstatement
- AP Contract

---

I understand that if I fail to meet the Standards of Progress and/or fail to follow the Academic Plan in future terms, my financial aid will be suspended and will not be reinstated until I have done the following:

- Achieved and maintained a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher
- Completed at least 60% of total credits attempted

Furthermore, I understand that if my financial aid is not reinstated that I am responsible for any tuition or fees owed. I meet the Standards of Progress.

**Student Initials:**
**Date:**
**Advisor Initials:**
**Date:**

---

**SAP TO BE COMPLETED BY ADVISOR**

---

**ACADEMIC LOAD RECOMMENDATION**

- **Fall:**
- **Spring:**

**Recommended # of hours for study:**
**Additional Comments:**

---

**REFERRAL:**

- **Academic Counseling & Testing**
- **Career Counseling**
- **Disability Accommodations**
- **Other**

---

**FOLLOW UP**

**Additional appointment(s):**

**Recommended:**

- **Before adding/dropping any classes**
- **Before registering for next term**

**ADVISOR COMMENTS:**

---

**RESULT:**

- **Do you recommend student for reinstatement?**
  - Yes
  - No

I have read, understood, and agree to the above.

**Student Signature:**
**Date:**
**Advisor Signature:**
**Date:**
2. Probation Status
3. Distance Degree

Profile

- 90% non-traditional in USA, outside of Michigan
- Professional advisor for online undergrad degree students, through School of Distance Education
- Faculty advising within departments for all graduate programs
- Growing enrollments and yields in online undergrad bachelors (4) and associates (2) programs.
3. Distance Degree

Appreciative Advising

- Build caring relationships, considerate of context
- Foster persistence through meaningful connections from orientation to graduation
- Help students feel connected to something larger than a computer, their online course, or the school’s web site (Varney 2009)
3. Distance Degree

Appreciative Advising

- Initial exploration video conference to understand the student’s strengths, weakness, motivation, and life goals
- Help student build confidence through clear planning
- Empower student with information about options for degree completion e.g. credit for prior learning
- Celebrate success to build confidence
3. Distance Degree

Proactive Advising

- Communicate timely reminders with complete information through emails and course space
- Email students an updated degree plan each semester to prompt next registration
- Require orientation course in first registered term - video tutorials, FAQs, learning activities vital to success

andrews.edu/distance/students
4. Disability Accommodation Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Active Accommodations</th>
<th>Percent of Undergrads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disability Services Coordinator services all accommodations from the Student Success Center.
4. Disability Accommodation

Appreciative Advising

- The Disability Services Coordinator uses the 6 components of Appreciative Advising when working with students for accommodation:
  - Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, Don’t Settle

- While not the students’ academic advisor, she ensures that the services provided “fit” each student and reassesses as necessary
4. Disability Accommodation

Proactive Advising

- Many Andrews’ students have not had accommodations in high school
- The coordinator is very involved with students and parents who need support and guidance through the assessment process
- Unknown disabilities are often “discovered” and accommodated for when struggling students are referred for academic intervention
Persistence to Graduation Initiatives

- 3rd semester transition from Success Advisor to major advisor to increase retention of underprepared students from 76%
- Probation status appointments during the summer allow students to register for courses early
- Students with disability accommodation files are encouraged to request accommodations early in the semester
- Proactive communication with distance students focuses on completion and registration of next course
- Students who marched with 6 or less credits to complete are encouraged to finish
  - Of 212 (2009-2015), 20 have graduated; 9 more this term
Findings: Reaching Students with Challenges through Academic Advising

Advisor evaluations compare:
- Underprepared
- Probation Status
- Distance degree
- Students with Disability Accommodation

Alumni survey 2016 adds perceptions across time
Satisfaction with Advisors

Current Advisor Evaluations 2016
618 Undergrad
3% Underprepared
9% Accommodations
8% Acad Probation
5% Online only

Satisfaction with Advisor Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underprepared</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Probation</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Only</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UG Mid-term Grades
Positive impact of proactive advising

- Mandatory mid-term grades began Spring 2015
- Students with low grades were contacted by the Student Intervention Coordinator
- Timely follow-up with students and their advisors

Percent Grade Improvement
Mid-term to Final Grades Fall 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>2015 MT&gt;=C</th>
<th>2015 MT&lt;C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-0.99</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1.99</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2.99</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3.99</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advising Makes a Difference

My advisor has informed me about help centers.  I understand the requirements for my degree.
At-Risk Students Rate Advisors Higher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistically Significant Difference Between Groups: One-way Anova $p &lt; .05$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendly, caring Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers interests, ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivates me to do best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps with long-term plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informs about help centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alumni Advising Survey 2016

- 657 of 697 usable online survey responses, from 6090 alums with emails
- 15 agreement scale items aligned to Servant Leadership Questionnaire & current student advisor evaluation
- Included advisor type, last year at AU, current location, and reflections on 2 advisors

Undergrad advisor provided enough time to discuss my concerns
- Strongly Agree, 78, 47%
- Agree, 51, 31%
- Neutral, 17, 10%
- Disagree, 12, 7%
- Strongly Disagree, 9, 5%
Altruistic Calling (AC)
- This person had a friendly, caring, Christian interest in me.
- This person respected my opinion in the choice of courses.
- This person did everything he/she could to serve me.

Holistic Support (HS) - Emotional Healing redefined in our advising context
- This person provided enough time to adequately discuss my concerns.
- This person respected me and maintained confidentiality.
- This person is the one I would turn to for support in making a decision.

Organizational Stewardship (OS)
- This person believed in the mission of Andrews University and the Seventh-day Adventist church.
- This person helped me value my Andrews education.
- This person motivated me to use my Andrews education to make a positive difference in the future.

Persuasive Mapping (PM)
- This person considered my abilities and interests in recommending courses.
- This person motivated me to do my best.
- This person helped me clarify my long-range plans and concerns.

Wisdom (WI)
- This person was well informed about the requirements for my degree.
- This person anticipated my needs and connected me with the campus resources.
- This person clearly answered my questions.

Advisor Qualities By Servant Leadership
Undergrad Vs Grad, Average % By Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>GR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALTRUISTIC CALLING</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOLISTIC CARING/EQ</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGN STEWARDSHIP</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERSUASIVE MAPPING</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WISDOM</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Perceptions of Advising

**Current & Alum Undergrads Compared**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>45%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>55%</th>
<th>60%</th>
<th>65%</th>
<th>70%</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>80%</th>
<th>85%</th>
<th>90%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC did all to serve me</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AC considered abilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AC respected my opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HS friendly, caring interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HS respected confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HS supported my decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OS believed AU mission</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OS motivated vocation</td>
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**Legend:**
- Alum UG A&SA
- Current UG A&SA
### Servant Leadership

**Reflections on Advisors: Alum Comments Coded**

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<td>Wisdom (WI)</td>
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Why advise?

- He had no influence on my career objective, rarely met with me and had even less impact on my spiritual life. I don't think he was really concerned and actually I'm not sure he knew who I was.
- She would always listen to what was important to me and encourage me to pursue my goals.... He inspired me to set higher goals.
- He was available, encouraging, knowledgeable, personable, and flexible. He truly cared for his students.
- She went out of her way to provide me with teaching opportunities and helped me find a job after I graduated.
- She always had every move mapped out for me and made great recommendations and valued my opinion.
- He wanted us to be accomplished in all areas of life (not just academically).
In Conclusion

“Heisserer and Parette (2002) observe that ‘the only variable that has a direct effect on student persistence is the quality of a relationship with a significant member of the college community’ (p. 72). Thus the advisor is often the person best suited to form a significant relationship with the student. At-risk students, in particular, may benefit greatly from the intrusive approach as they may not be aware of how to move forward when unexpected situations arise.”

Intrusive Advising, J Varney 2007 NACADA article
Your Story

- How does your campus advise at-risk students?
- What advising strategy is working for some at-risk population on your campus?
- What take-away do you plan to explore or implement?
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Academic Probation Coordinator for College of Arts & Sciences, and School of Health Professions

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