

# The Role of Academic Advising

## *CAS Standards Contextual Statement*

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Academic advising is an essential element of a student's collegiate experience. Advising evolves from the institution's culture, values, and practices and is delivered in accordance with these factors. Advising practice draws from various theories and strategies in the social sciences, humanities, and education (e.g., teaching and counseling, the psychology of learning, communication studies, theories of decision making and information transfer, and story telling as a mechanism for understanding human experiences).

*In recent years, increasing political, social and economic demands, along with newly developed technologies, have spurred changes in educational delivery systems, student access, and faculty roles. As a result of these changes, more specialized student support opportunities have emerged, including adaptations in academic advising. And as White (2000) noted with a growing "number of majors available on college campuses, an increasingly complex and rapidly shifting work environment..., and a dizzyingly extensive array of out-of-class educational experiences to choose from, college students are demanding more and better advising" (NACADA, 2005).*

Academic advising is one of the very few institutional functions that connect all students to the institution. As higher educational curricula become increasingly complex and as educational options expand, pressure to make the academic experience as meaningful as possible for students has increased as well. Higher education, in turn, has responded with renewed attention to the need for quality academic advising.

*Once almost exclusively a faculty function, today academic advising has come forward as a specialization within the higher education community. While remaining a role that faculty members play, academic advising has emerged as an area of expertise in and of itself (NACADA, 2005).*

Habley (2005) expounds the notion that "advising bears the distinction of being the only structured activity on campus in which all students have the opportunity for ongoing, one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution, and this fact is a source of its tremendous potential today" (NACADA, 2005). This, coupled with increasing educational options, has brought pressure to make the student educational experiences as meaningful as possible.

The establishment of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) following the first national conference on advising in 1977 was a significant turning point in according recognition to those within higher education who consider their work in academic advising as purposeful and unique. Today, NACADA flourishes with membership numbering more than 9100 and national and regional meetings that attract more than 6000 participants annually. The NACADA Statement of Core Values, last revised in 2004, meets the need for ethical principles to guide advising practice and provides a professional framework for all academic advisors to examine their behaviors.

Academic advising became a significant category within professional literature during the 1980s, and this trend continues today. NACADA publishes the *NACADA Journal*, a juried research journal, along with books, monographs, videos and CDs that examine various aspects of advising. Some of the most referenced resources in the field include *Academic Advising: A comprehensive handbook*, *The Status of Academic Advising: The Findings from the ACT Sixth National Survey*, the *Guide to Assessment in Academic Advising*, and the resources found on the Web from the *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources*. Information about NACADA's publications, as well as a link to the *Clearinghouse*, can be located electronically via the NACADA web site on the World Wide Web at [www.nacada.ksu.edu](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu). The NACADA Executive Office is an excellent source of general information.

Academic advising is a crucial component of all students' experiences in higher education. Within this context, students can find meaning in their lives, make significant decisions about the future, be supported to achieve to their maximum potential, and access all that higher education has to offer. When practiced with competence and dedication, academic advising can enhance retention rates. In an age often characterized by impersonality and detachment, academic advising provides a vital personal connection that students need.

## **References, Readings, and Resources**

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