Supporting Student Development and Success With Pre-Advising Reflective Writing

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Background

Model grew out of reform-rich environment

• multi-year effort to highlight & improve academic advising
• utilize the benefits of “reflective practice”

Designed with student life cycle in mind

Required no institution-wide buy-in, adoption, or funding to improve advising

Education for the Knowledge Age

- Information
- Technology
- Globalization
- Rapid Change

College education

- Self-directing learners
- Self-authored
Who will help them map out their futures? Or the pathways for getting there?

**REQUIREMENTS**
- First Year Course
- General Education
- Disciplinary Major
- Capstone

"Arc" of an Undergraduate Education

Some Choices That Students Face...
Challenges of Finding Own Voice

“By the time they graduate from college, most students still have not achieved the kind of self-authorship that would allow them to think independently, make choices, and pursue their dreams.”

Baxter Magolda (2002)

Journey Toward Self-Authorship

“a shift from uncritical acceptance of external authority to critical analysis of authority in order to establish one’s own internal authority”

- Recognizing that multiple perspectives exist
- Evaluating multiple perspectives based on internal beliefs
- Act consistently based on internal beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Externally Focused</th>
<th>Internally Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent on others for answers, values, identity</td>
<td>Beginning to question authority, form views, develop identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming own sense of values and views to guide decisions</td>
<td>Self-Authored Life</td>
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Hodge, Baxter Magolda, and Haynes (2009)
Advising – Purpose of Education

“While all college educators need to focus attention on helping students recognize and achieve the larger outcomes of higher education, academic advisors are in a strategic position to engage students in thinking about the larger purposes of their educations.”

White and Schulenberg (2012)

Self-Directing Learners

“…are strategic, self-regulated, and reflective”

Metacognitive Knowledge
(declarative, procedural, conditional)

- Personal Resources
  - Prior Knowledge
  - Available Strategies
- Task Requirements
  - Type of Learning
  - Appropriate Strategies

Metacognitive Control
(self-regulation)

- Plan
- Reflection
- Goals
- Beliefs
- Attitudes
- Motivation
- Reflection
- Monitor
- Evaluate
- Reflection

Modified from Ertmer and Newby (1996)
Goals for Academic Advising

Help students:
• stay focused on the “big picture”
• be empowered to make own decisions
• find coherence in their choices
• develop the whole person alongside the scholar

Goals of Pre-Advising Reflections

• pre-engage and prepare students for advising conversations
• nurture students’ development
• inform students (and advisors) about broader institutional goals for learning
• improve advisor effectiveness
• redefine academic advising as learning
• promote student retention and success
Developing an Advising Co-Curriculum

Inspired by:
• Baxter Magolda and King (2008)
• Beloit First Year Initiative - Gummer (2012)

For each semester, articulate:
• Learning goals
• Advising themes
• Reflection prompts

Goals and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sem.</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Advising Theme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Learning to Learn</td>
<td>Intentional Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Liberal arts</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Developing self-authorship</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intellectual &amp; practical skills</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Electing a major</td>
<td>Intellectual community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Becoming a Professional</td>
<td>Disciplinary knowledge, skills &amp; dispositions</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Capstone Research</td>
<td>Integration &amp; Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Preparing to Graduate</td>
<td>Vocation &amp; Next Steps</td>
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Pre-Advising Reflection Model

- Students Complete Pre-Advising Reflection
  - Hosted by Google Forms
  - Identify, reflect, and interpret experiences
- Read by Instructor Before Advising Session
- Starting Point of Advising Conversation

Example Pre-Advising Reflection

Pre-Advising Reflection

**Semester II: Agency**

An important goal of higher education is to help you develop your own voice. As a vital part of the journey into adulthood, becoming "self-authored" means developing the capacity to "integrate generate beliefs, values, identity, and social relations." This transformation not only involves intellectual development, but also new understandings of the nature of knowledge, views of self and social relations, and meaning-making. Developing this kind of agency will empower you to new levels of independent thinking, identifying goals, making choices, and accomplishing dreams throughout college and the rest of your life.

What specific situations over the past year have given you the greatest sense of investment and ownership of your own education? Describe why you felt that way, and suggest some ways to actively cultivate that feeling more often. [2-1]

Your answer
Example Reflective Prompts - Learning

• Identify two specific learning goals you have for the semester ahead, and explain how you might be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others to do so.

• What general skills (e.g., quantitative, writing, critical thinking, speaking) would you like to improve? Identify one interesting course that would further your efforts in this area.

• What aspects of learning (e.g., asking questions in class; arranging meetings with professors; deeper reading; deeper study strategies; turning in assignments on time) would you like to work on during the next semester? Describe a strategy for doing this during the next semester.

Example Reflective Prompts

• Describe the aspects of your college experience that have brought you the most joy or satisfaction. Why…

• Describe one way in which you are now different from the person who first arrived. Do you have new knowledge that gives you a different understanding of the world…

• Identify at least one (kind of) course to take that will involve exploration of the unknown and/or risk-taking.

• Identify at least one curricular or co-curricular opportunity to investigate.

• Have your long-term career or educational interests or goals changed? If so, how are they different? If not …
Advising Themes and Prompts

After reading the reflective prompts, consider the following:

• What might we learn about our students, and what might they learn about themselves, from this approach?

• How could this model be modified to suit the needs of your own institution?

• How might this model be adapted to support student learning in other contexts?

Feedback from Faculty Advisors

“I know better what questions to ask/where to focus limited time with students”

“I would say it’s been a great way to… and remind both me and the student to move beyond ‘transaction-based advising’”

“The answers to the questions helped me start conversations that felt more fulfilling”

“… last spring my advisees reported that they were very satisfied with their advising sessions”

“I incorporated a series of the questions into the sophomore gateway course on “The Study of History” to help students reflect on what they had learned in the class AND what they hoped to do in the future”
Feedback & Assessing Agency

Early Results:
• Students more prepared for advising
• Increased self knowledge and ownership
• Deeper advising conversations

Developing Agency Rubric
• Internalization
• Curiosity
• Reflection
• Ownership

Intended Outcomes
• “pre-engage” students for advising conversations and improve student decision-making about course selection, co-curricular opportunities, and future plans
• nurture students’ development of reflective skills, habits of mind, and sense of agency
• inform students (and advisors) about the rationale for, and value of, core components of the liberal arts curriculum
• foster advisor knowledge and effectiveness through greater understanding of students’ educational experiences and goals, and a “curricular view” of advising
• redefine academic advising as a learning curriculum
• promote student retention and success
Other Opportunities

- **encourage new students to engage** actively and critically with the campus community through thoughtful exploration and reflection
- advance, deepen, and structure crucial **relationships and conversations** between advisors and advisees
- promote **deeper conversations about learning**, education, and pathways among students and advisors
- give students and faculty experience thinking about opportunities offered by **reflective practices**
- provide **evidence about teaching, assessing, and improving “liberal arts” learning**, other institutional values, and student development

Benefits of Pre-Advising Reflections

- Low cost (requires no funding, little extra time)
- Can be used by faculty or professional academic advisors alike
- Improves efficiency and quality of advising
- Model is endlessly adaptable to different institutions, disciplines, and educational contexts
- Serves many purposes, including educational, student development, career preparation, faculty development, and assessment
further thoughts on pre-advising reflective writing ...?

Sources of Inspiration


