The Helicopter Advisor: A student's co-pilot

Melanie Smith Nichols
Academic Support Coordinator
Colorado State University

Rene Couture
Assistant Professor
Arkansas Tech University

NACADA National Conference
October 2014

About our title:
Helicopter as Intrusive

- Intrusive advising can be seen as “tough love” (Cannon, 2013)
- Some students need more of an “intervention approach”
- Do these sound “parental”?

Who are today’s college students?

- They want to be autonomous, but are more dependent (Levine & Dean, 2012)
- Students “need” ideal course schedules each semester
- Students “need” someone to help them get connected to other students and campus resources
- Immediate – and satisfactory – answers, even in areas we don’t control (Jarnot & Marinucci, 2014)

Today’s college students

- Consumer oriented
  - Parents too, concerned with R.O.I.
  - See college as a service and looking for:
    1. Convenience
    2. Service
    3. Quality
    4. Low prices

Levine & Dean, 2012

Millennial (Generation Y)

- Born 1980-1994
  - Currently ages 20-34
  - “relatively unattached to organized politics and religion, linked by social media, burdened by debt, distrustful of people, in no rush to marry— and optimistic about the future.”

Pew Research, 2014

Today’s college students

- More stressed and anxious
- Less reflective
- Are fine with rules, but need to be told
- See themselves as global citizens, but are less aware of world events
- Are less “environmental” than older generations

Pew Research, 2014
Students need help in making decisions

From “heavy support” to “supporting role”

Parents

- “Parents’ weekend has become parents’ week. They don’t leave.”
- Some want a good match with roommate’s parents
- Students are accustomed to having their parents involved, so they don’t find it odd for it to continue
- Students would rather contact parents when problems arise

In loco parentis

- “In place of parent”
- As a legal term, it doesn’t carry the weight it once did, except in cases of negligence
- As an informal term, it might be making a comeback
  - Increases in policies and rules, protecting students from harm
  - Is character development taboo? Do we gauge this in learning outcomes?
  - Students were us to take care of them (get them jobs, scholarships, feed them, clean up after them, keep them safe)

A return to in loco parentis?

- Students want to be free from university control, yet want us to protect them
- They want administrators and faculty to grant them privacy while simultaneously wanting every need catered
- They are no longer rebelling against their parents, but ally themselves with parents to challenge unlikable university policies
**External locus of control**

- They're ok with rules so long as the rules don't infringe upon them
- If anything bad happens, it is not their fault, but that of their professor/advisor/roommate/weather/computer/Blackboard/transfer credit/poor luck
- When good things happen, "I'm awesome"

**How we can help them**

- Students need to
  - see themselves as key players in their own success
  - learn from failure
  - learn from models of success
  - develop more grit and resilience

"...Learning is hard. True, learning is fun, exhilarating and gratifying — but it is also often daunting, exhausting, and sometimes discouraging….To help chronically low-performing but intelligent students, educators and parents must first recognize that character is at least as important as intellect."

Angela Lee Duckworth (in Seligman, 2011, p. 103)
Cognitive Skills vs. Non-Cognitive Skills

Cognitive skills
- Intelligence
- Attention
- Memory
- Logic & Reasoning

http://www.learningrx.com/cognitive-enhancement-faq.htm

Non-cognitive skills
- Perseverance
- Optimism
- Resilience
- Social intelligence
- Curiosity
- Self-confidence
- Gratitude
- Resourcefulness
- Ambition
- Professionalism
- Conscientiousness
- Self-control

Non-cognitive skills: Grit
- [Link to Angela Duckworth's Ted Talk](http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit#t-177781)
- Angela Lee Duckworth, Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania

Grit assessment
- [Link to Grit assessment page](https://sites.sas.upenn.edu/duckworth/pages/research)
- [Link to online test](www.tinyurl.com/testgrit)

"The idea of building grit and building self-control is that you get that through failure, and in most highly academic environments in the US no one fails at anything."

– Dominic Randolph, head of Riverdale Country School

Tough, 2012, p. 153
Increasing Grit in Students

Resources that promote grit, tenacity and perseverance:
- Academic mindsets (growth mindset)
- Learning environment
  - Struggle
  - Challenge and Early Failure
- Students' relationship to the learning environment
  - Deliberate Practice


Brief Interventions that Address Mindsets
- Explicitly teach students to have a growth mindset (intelligence grows with effort)
- Reframe difficulty not as personal failings but learning experiences
- Relate course materials to students' lives
- Clarify goals and anticipate obstacles
- Build protective positive assets


Learning Environment
- Create a classroom culture in which struggle and risk-taking are valued more than just getting the right answer.
  - Get students comfortable with struggle so they see it as just a normal part of learning.
- Pull students out of their comfort zones intentionally, but in a safe and supportive environment.

Expectations of Challenge and Early Failure
- High Expectations
- Mental Contrasting: Contrasting on positive outcome and simultaneously concentrating on the obstacles.
- Implementation Intentions: Specific plans in the form of if/then statements that link the obstacles with ways to overcome them.

Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011

Deliberate Practice
- Effortful practice on things you can't yet do.
  “Practice is not easy. You are going to be confused. You are going to be frustrated. When you’re learning, you have to make mistakes. You need to do things over and over again, and that can be boring.”

Perkins-Gough, 2013
In Sum

Provide students with opportunities to take on higher order or long term goals that are worthy to the student, that are optimally challenging and aligned with student's own interest.

Provide rigorous and supportive environment:
- Growth mindset
- High expectations
- Sense of belonging/safety & support
- Challenge and early failure/struggle
- Deliberate/Effortful Practice

References


Soft skills such as grit, charisma and the ability to communicate well can also contribute more to success than anything studied in college.

References