

Advising Philosophy – Megumi Makino-Kanehiro

One of the things that I have come to realize is that for me, advising is an opportunity to be able to constantly learn. As a new advisor, I learned the basic difference between prescriptive and developmental advising and the advising as teaching approaches, but I am learning now, and continue to learn. As a result, I find that as I read and work with students, my advising philosophy is constantly evolving.

I recently read an article that advances the author's belief that throughout the range of different advising approaches possible, the core or foundation is learning-centered advising (Wilcox, 2016). The rest of the approaches form a continuum from passive learning (for example, prescriptive advising) to active learning, (for example, coaching.) I have been shaped by a number of approaches. Having seen the benefits of mandatory advising, for example, I am a firm believer in proactive advising for the specific population with which I work, but I am also well aware of its limitations and the fact that it does not necessarily work for students who may be more self-directed.

Since each student is an individual and each advising appointment presents a unique combination of presenting and underlying issues, it is necessary to approach each appointment with a fresh perspective. Having a working understanding of - and appreciation for - the various advising approaches, allows me, as the advisor, to adapt to the specific student and advising situation.

My foundation is teaching and learning centered advising, which I feel are in many respects, intertwined because I see each advising encounter (whether it be by email, online, in a workshop, or appointment) as an opportunity to learn about the student and inform, scaffold, encourage, support, guide, and provide options for them. In this process, I also see it as an opportunity for me to learn how to become a better advisor.

As much as advising interactions depend upon the student, they are also shaped by the advisor's perspective and view of the world. As a result, I have a number of additional guiding approaches, concepts and ideas that also inform my advising philosophy.

I have often heard that advisors use appreciative advising techniques without being aware that they are doing so. I agree this is true, but I also believe that appreciative advising is most effectively used with a complete understanding of the various phases: disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver and don't settle. The reason why I truly appreciate this approach is that despite its first phase being worded "disarm," this approach is a positive one that encourages ongoing work with students and ongoing improvement by the advisor: "it inspires advisor thinking that leads to thoughtful, reflective, and intentional verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors" (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2013, p. 91). My favorite phases are the last two, deliver and don't settle, because they focus on following through with the student and inspiring them to always strive for higher goals.

NACADA has identified seven Core Values of equal weight: caring, commitment, empowerment, inclusivity, integrity, professionalism and respect. I feel a strong connection to the Core Values, since I had the honor of serving on the Task Force responsible for developing the core values. Personally, I feel that integrity, professionalism, commitment and respect are basic requirements of being an advisor. I thus find myself focusing most on empowerment, caring, and inclusivity because I think these are the powerful values that really allow advisors to make meaningful connections with students. The power to see the potential in each student and motivate him or her, the power to have compassion and truly

listen, and the power to make each and every student feel acknowledged and valued, are all essential to my advising philosophy.

Over the past two years, my philosophy of advising has been forever changed by my engagement in three key initiatives: (1) I applied and was selected to be a member of the Faculty / Staff cohort for intensive Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Center training, and have been recently been invited to serve as a member of its Design Team. (2) I served as a co-chair for the Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Subcommittee of the Excellence in Academic Advising Initiative on campus. (3) I was selected to serve on NACADA's Race, Ethnicity, and Inclusion Work Group. As a result of these three opportunities, I have had transformational experiences, taken part in sometimes difficult, but important conversations, and reflected on my work as an advisor. As a result, Native Hawaiian concepts such as kuleana (often defined as "responsibility," but also "area of care") and a'o (teaching and learning, as a reciprocal activity) allow me to reframe my thinking and interactions with students.

The concept of ikigai, which essentially translates as "passion" or "what gets you out of bed in the morning" (Matsushashi, 2018, p. 8) has also driven a lot of my advising philosophy lately. Ikigai is often portrayed as a Venn diagram with intersecting passion, skills, goals and the desire to help others (Garcia & Miralles, 2016), but I think it is extremely rare to be able to align all four. I am one of the lucky ones, in that my passions, skills, goals and desire to help others do align in my current dream job and motivate me to provide the best advising I possibly can for my students.

References

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