Advising with Social Justice to Maximize Success for Underprivileged Students

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NACADA
THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY
FOR ACADEMIC ADVISING

Our Positionality

• Educational system is historically discriminative, inequitable, and oppressive to minoritized students

• Academic advisers as well as professors and student affairs professionals who interact with students daily are an important part of the system that students need to navigate through

• How deep we are aware of ourselves and at what level we meet students determine the quality of advising interaction

• Students have unlimited potentials that can be nurtured and developed through creating holding, safe, and just spaces

• Embracing differences and diversity enables fundamental changes of our being, leading to growth development, and transformation.

• Advising with social justice is an act of deep sharing of life that is refreshing, meaningful, fulfilling for advisors

• Systemic change in society happens gradually but surely when we help one person truly change, grow, and develop at a time

• Whoever understands him/herself, understands others; whoever transforms him/herself, transforms the world!

Our Questions

• How to cultivate presence? How to be true to yourself? How do you mean to be professional in emotionally-charged situations?

• What is empowerment in the truest sense? How do you help students learn not to give away their power?

• How do underprivileged students interact with you differently from their more privileged counterparts? How do you respond accordingly in advising settings?

• How do you become more aware of the power dynamic in advising setting? how do you interact with students when you are challenged or/and threatened by them (mostly perceived, not real)?

• How do you feel and react when you are challenged as a female, a person of color, a person with a disability, or a non-native English speaker? How do your reactions affect the quality of your advising? Is it true that hidden prejudice and biases become not so hidden when you are challenged?

• When do you want or not want to sympathize with students? Who do you want to or not want to sympathize with? Is there anything in you that you have not worked through that you try to protect subconsciously?

• Do you see Matrix of Domination framework works in advising settings? Do you see that defending yourself often becomes offending others, and protecting behaviors turns into destructive ones?

• How do you advocate for a student (professor, advisor, staff) when you know that injustice is done to him/her?

• How do you see otherness, objectification, and projection of self as an integral part of advising? And how do you turn that into good use?

Theories Applied

• Johnson's Matrix of Domination (Johnson, 2001): We belong to multiple social categories (class, race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, nationalities, religion, etc.). Our place in social world is a package deal, so it makes no sense to talk about the effect of being in one of these social categories

• Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) : For self-understanding, empowerment and transformation, the power of collectively and individually constructed reality

• Abes, Jones & McEwen' Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007): Personality, identities and filter are one integral sense-making mechanism and operating system.

• Baxter Magolda's Self-authorship (Magolda, 2008): What is self? Who is authoring?

• Kegan's Constructive Developmental Framework (Kegan, 1982): conscious expansion and reintegrating constitution of self (Six ISs: Incorporative, Impulsive, imperial, interpersonal, institutional and interindividual)

• Prigogine's Non-equilibrium System (Prigogine, 1984): Open systems have dissipative structure and are self-organizing, two key concepts for systemic changes and inner transformation. Stop feeding energy to inner operating system (personality and identities) so the functional patterns of our personality and identities can be transformed

• Kalachakra Mandala as a map of consciousness (Crossman & Barou, 2004) : To explore the inner structure/patterns/paradigm/being of consciousness and energy, as a theoretical framework in advising, student affairs and human development.

Our Cases

• Major selection, encouraging or discouraging student for certain majors, for example, assuming it is difficult for Black and Latinx students to pursue engineering, pre-med, or nursing (under the name of career-oriented, assuming they go to work directly after graduation).

• A black female student came to my office after she found that the advisor she was seeking (who is also black) was not available. She said: "I have a few questions you might not have answers. If you don't, you do not have to (pretend you have)"…….

• A White female student from rural Michigan who had 20ish students in her graduating class had difficulty in IAH (Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities) course that deals with power and privileges. She is a minority in a sense and is disadvantaged by the curriculum and pedagogy (at least she is not developmentally and culturally ready).

• A female, international student from India with a low GPA defies my advice as she was determined to get into the College of Business (dilemma, struggle, ethical decision and be at peace with the process and outcome)

• A student with a disability (without revealing to me) came to me and chatted with me about eastern philosophy. We met a few times and drank tea together in my office. We talked about meditation and yoga. I felt there were some underlying issues, but I did not want to go for them unless the student started to share with me. However, I worked to create a space for him. After he graduated, he wrote me a note that affirmed my impressions and thanked me profusely.

• A White female student came into my office one morning. I just completed my morning meditation and reading. I was grounded, open and gentle. I greeted her and asked her to take a seat. I asked how she was doing, and she started to cry……..