

Effective Faculty Advisors

Last Modified on 08/03/2021 4:49 pm EDT

Stephen O. Wallace and Beverly A. Wallace. NACADA Training for Faculty Advisors. Edited by Dr. Wendi Prater, Director eLearning, McNeese State University.

Effective Advisors Are Continuing Learners

The art of academic advising reflects dynamic processes practiced in a continuously evolving academic environment with a changing student body. Faculty advisors must keep up with modifications in university policies, programs, advising resources, and advising best practices or they risk employing ineffective advising methods that misguide students with outdated information. Ongoing development is implicit in the concept of advising as an art; therefore, ongoing advisor development is critical to the effectiveness of the advisor.

Effective Advisors Are Teachers

Students accustomed to information available at their fingertips often unrealistically expect instant answers to their questions. In addition, some students depend upon their advisors for quick answers such that the advisor's office resembles an information booth with a revolving door, often with the same students returning with the same questions. Advisors must overcome these feelings of stress, and dispel any pride in being known as the go-to person for all answers and quick answers. The reliant student's behavior may feed the advisor's ego, but fails to empower the student. McNeese's student knowledgebase has resources published for students, so that they have access to information as needed.

Faced with the demand to provide accurate, on-the-spot information, the faculty advisor's heart may start racing, especially if the answer does not immediately come to mind. Rather than panic, the advisor as teacher needs to remember that in the advising office, just like in the classroom, a primary objective should be to teach students to take responsibility for their decisions. By modeling the process of finding the answer, not just giving the answer, both the advisor and the advisee learn: The former adds to the advising tool kit and the latter gains greater understanding of the issues and rationales of policies and procedures. Instead of exulting in the ability to provide the answer, the faculty advisor who embraces advising as teaching observes with satisfaction as the student discovers the answer. Advisors can extend this gratification as they witness students taking ownership of their educational experiences and developing critical skills transferable to other dimensions of their lives. In addition, faculty advisors reduce the number of unannounced pop quizzes they encounter such that they can invest more time in effectively advising students and in professional development activities.

Effective Advisors Demonstrate Competence

As all teachers know, a perfect score on a pop quiz does not necessarily translate to proficiency in the topic of the test. Likewise, although faculty advisors must initially focus on learning the basic advising procedures on their campuses, the needs of their students, and the important information and resources available to address those needs, they must continuously engage in learning about advising and about the advisor's role in assisting students with their educational goals. All advisors need a professional development plan that fine-tunes the craft of advising and leads to a deeper understanding and application of advising strategies. This plan should include topics such as best practices, student development and career development theories, and the use of technology.

Ultimately, advisors need to acquire the knowledge to teach students how to successfully navigate the university through the completion of a desired program of study.

Faculty advisors also need to realize that excellent academic advising, like teaching, is an art and a science, and becoming masterful advisor requires progress through a developmental learning process. This knowledgebase's

[Advisor Resource](#) article provides information for the advisor's success.

You are Pop Quiz—Ready! For your next advising session with a student.

There is a knock on the door. A student enters and asks, "Professor Taylor, do you have a minute?" Dr. Taylor welcomes the student and asks, "How may I assist you?" The student responds, "You're my advisor, and I have a question about. . . ." It is pop quiz time. Dr. Taylor, prepared and with advising resources at hand, confidently smiles.

Aiming for Excellence

- Chart milestones in learning information for becoming an effective advisor. Take time to identify current areas of knowledge and those that must be acquired, use the questions and strategies in this knowledgebase. Then at the end of your first year, use these as post-tests to assess growth. This self-assessment should be repeated in each continuing year.
- Identify internal (institutional) and external sources of information that provide answers to the questions students may ask. For quick access to needed information, bookmark the most useful electronic sources and obtain hard copies of available institutional publications with basic information tabbed and highlighted. This knowledgebase has [Advisor Resources](#) compiled for you.
- Construct a FAQs list by consulting with other advisors, reviewing existing lists, and listening to students. Maintain it as an evolving, dynamic document to ensure the relevancy and accuracy of the questions and answers.
- Review the file of an advisee with an upcoming appointment. Based on information gleaned from the file, how will you greet the student and open the conversation? McNeese also provides students with [Registration and Advising Resources](#) in the [student knowledgebase](#). Ask students to bookmark these links.
- McNeese faculty members and students schedule advising appointments using RegisterBlast. Use the links below to schedule an appointment and share the login link with students.
 - [RegisterBlast \(Appointment System\) - Advisor's Login Link URL](#)
 - [RegisterBlast \(Appointment System\) - Student's Login Link URL](#)
- Generate descriptions of the programs, majors, and minors offered through the institution and meet with the department chair or program director to discuss the information that students interested in these areas should know. McNeese has these resources listed in this knowledgebase on the [Advising Resources](#) page.
- Design and implement a method to assess your effectiveness as a faculty advisor. This could include soliciting student feedback through surveys and peer observations of advising sessions.

Next Steps? > Continue by reading through the [Advisor Resources](#) and preparing your checklist and notes for your next advising session with a student. Or go back and review the previous article [Mastering and Managing Information](#).
