Chapter 16 - Advising Online

Reader Learning Outcomes

Readers will:

- List the pros and cons of advising students electronically. Recognize that for each advisor, the list will vary according to that own advisor's strength and weaknesses in communicating, motivating and leading students toward goal attainment.
- Create an advising "contract" to be used with each advisee. Include in it a goal statement, your policy regarding communication procedures and your expected timeline for responses/feedback both to and from the advisor as well as the types of communication the advisor and advisee will use.
- Research various forms of electronic communication currently in use; determine if any of these might be a good fit for your current paradigm. Check feedback on the use of these in the NACADA listservs to which you belong.
- Create boilerplate messages for frequently asked questions such as semester deadlines, changing majors and transferability of course. Be sure to personalize these with the advisee's name, etc. before use. Maintain a warm, professional tone. End with an open-ended question for advisees who are retention risks.
- Choose or create a method for maintaining files of electronic communications with advisees, coworkers, etc. Check the method periodically to fine tune any problems.
- Create your own network of appropriate coworkers and colleagues who play an integral part at your school and in electronic advising. This will allow you to learn and share best practices in advising online.

Aiming for Excellence discussion questions and activities

- Create a list of referral links with specific e-mail addresses of colleagues willing to help your students or who have specific knowledge your students will need. Using this strategy, students seek and meet another person with whom to connect (and with whom you can later follow up) and do not merely feel shuffled to another on-campus location.
- Create a file with boilerplate e-mails for responses to common questions such as "When is the last day to withdraw from classes?" or "How do I log into my online class?" Name the e-mail response files appropriately for easy retrieval.
- Start a coffee klatch! Invite other advisors and other colleagues to an informal meeting once a month (week, semester, etc.) to chat about challenges and triumphs in working with students at a distance.
- Join a NACADA Listserv, or other electronic mail board, for advisors working in distance education or one of the many other special interest groups. When confronted with a problem or troubling situation, you can look to the expertise of dozens, if not hundreds, of other advisors who have worked through similar issues.
- Start a best practices thread online. Send out an inspirational or informational e-mail to your network of fellow advisors and other supporters. For example: "I make note of my advisees'

birthdates and send them short Happy Birthday greetings via e-mail." Encourage others to add to the thread and be sure to hit *reply all* to ensure everyone on the mailing lists sees all the entries.

- Organize your day by utilizing an online calendar feature. Block off certain hours of the day for certain tasks; for example, 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.: answer e-mails; 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.: respond to FaceBook and Twitter; 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.; 2:00- 3:00 p.m.: review graduation petitions. This tactic ensures that all means of communication are being checked routinely.