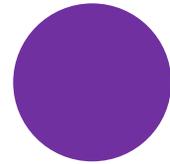


ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Ouachita Baptist University



Responsibilities

Be prepared. Before meeting with the student (preferably not in the student's presence), study the information in the student's advising folder. If information is lacking, request it from your dean or the Academic Affairs office. Keep records of all courses of action, referrals, and reports. The advising folder is considered confidential; keep it in a secure location. In addition to the advising folder, much of the student's information may be found in INFO. For example, the transcript, GPA, sub-sheet for transfer hours, and preregistration schedule may all be found here.

Make person-to-person contact. The first responsibility of the advisor is to get to know the students. Students need more than your signature. They need information, referral, and interest. They need the feeling that someone is going to bat for them and is willing to communicate with them. Ultimately, the message advisors should convey is "I want to see you make it."

Observe professional ethics. In the course of personal contact with students much may be learned of a confidential nature. Share information which would be helpful to students with appropriate staff members. Handle carefully any information that would embarrass students. It is illegal to share information about students with anyone outside the institution without express written consent of the student.

Listen. Develop listening skills. Many times students will say more in the manner in which they speak than in specific words. The advisor should avoid putting words in a student's mouth. Asking questions is more productive than pontificating on what ought to be done.

Seek alternative routes. Point out to students what doors are closing and what doors are still open. Enable students to seek routes which will open the most doors both academically and beyond graduation.

Let mistakes be made. The final decision should be the student's. Within the requirements for a particular degree there is usually some flexibility. The consequences of mistakes need to be shared in part by the institution. If honest mistakes are made, and a course of recovery can be planned, recommend changes in courses or degree plan. If the relationship between student and advisor is a good one, honest mistakes are more likely to be acceptable to both parties. However, keep good notes of your discussions with students.

Best Practices

Effective advisors do the following:

- Recognize the worth, dignity, and potential of each student.
- Maintain adequate office hours throughout the semester.
- Keep accurate records of all advising discussions.
- Help students plan their coursework to meet both university requirements and long term goals.
- Discuss the CORE program as it relates to a student's overall educational experience, their major and minor, and their foundation of lifelong learning.
- Help students focus by asking questions that evoke more than "yes" and "no" responses.
- Encourage students to identify their strengths and cultivate their abilities.
- Eliminate distractions, maintain an open posture, and establish good eye contact.
- Pay close attention to a student's nonverbal behavior, seek clarification if needed, and respond accordingly.
- Be prepared to help students with personal problems. Be aware of campus resources and refer students to them as needed.

Effective advisors do NOT:

- Make all the decisions for the advisee.
- Criticize fellow faculty members, support staff, or administrators.
- Betray a student's confidence on issues that do not warrant referral to other resources.
- Attempt to handle problems that fall outside reasonably normal behavior.
- Exhibit any action which may be perceived as sexual harassment.
- Encourage students to circumvent institutional policies or regulations.
- Appear bored, distracted, or uncaring.
- Miss the little cues that may indicate larger problems.
- Expect freshmen to know as much as seniors.
- Forget what it was like to be 18 years old.