



Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources

Advising Issues & Resources

Techniques for Drawing Students to Advising

- [Resource](#) for cardboard cutouts mentioned in article
- [Overview](#) of issues surrounding

Did Einstein Know the Date to Withdraw? Techniques and Activities to Educate Your Campus Community About Academic Advising

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Could a future U.S. President be a current advisee? Did the 21st century Albert Einstein discuss with us the course withdrawal process or did we assist the future Frida Kahlo identify her major and exhibit venue? While it is exciting to consider who we interact with in our roles as academic advisors, these interactions only are possible if we identify techniques that foster awareness of advising.

How do we reach out to students and alert them to valuable resources? How do we communicate with students when the advising center is not temporally or spatially convenient? There are techniques and activities that can answer these questions and help us reach out and engage students.

Academic advisors are creative individuals who enjoy “shaking” things up to serve students. Most campuses are faced with a parking challenge and many campuses offer a shuttle service that transports students from classroom buildings to parking facilities. Why not have an “advisor onboard” to share deadlines, coming attractions, and identify resources for students? At Weber State University we utilized this strategy in a program named “GAS” – Get Advising on the Shuttle. Large signs placed in the windshield of the bus alerted students to the onboard advisor who provided information and answered quick questions.

Other advisors wear bright t-shirts embroidered with “ADVISOR” and walk around campus during class changes to advertise advising and answer quick student questions. This supportive activity can occur during the beginning of a semester, at significant deadlines, or prior to registration. If your limited office resources won’t allow for the utilization of real people, try a famous person cardboard character placed in strategic locations around campus. Keep the message brief and provide a number or location for more information.

We must communicate the existence of new programs to students if we want our programs to succeed. While an “open house” is a common way to accomplish this, consider stretching your open house beyond your four walls. Identify high traffic classroom buildings and secure the utilization of a common space. Buy donuts and beverages (milk, coffee, juice, etc.), and invite people to enjoy a donut while you tell them about your services. We utilized this technique when we extended our advising center hours; we sponsored “open houses” in the evening during the

course break times. We not only informed students but had the opportunity to converse with faculty interested in the scope of our services. Activities that reach out to the campus community build rapport, increase understanding of academic advising, and deliver students to your center.

Registration periods and the start of each semester are guaranteed to ensure plenty of student customers. Why not ease the stress of these high demand times with office themes? Sponsor a “Happy New Year’s Party” for the new academic or calendar year; decorate with a few balloons and streamers, have some refreshments, rent a bubble blowing machine and you have an instant party in the reception room. At the University of Utah, we included a “Back to School” picture booth, took digital photos and sent them to parents.

The reception area of our advising office is ground zero—everyone travels through this space. We offer a “quick answer advisor” service located in the lobby and staffed by full-time and peer advisors. The “quick answer advisor” easily comprehends when a situation requires more than a quick answer and helps students make an appointment so they can be adequately served. This strategy serves three purposes. First, the receptionist no longer has to answer informational advising questions while trying to schedule appointments, answer telephone calls, etc. Second, this eliminates the two-minute interaction scheduled for a 30 minute appointment. Third, it allows students to interact with an academic advisor on a regular basis for routine information. This could be taken a step further to include other locations on campus to increase visibility of the advising office to the entire campus community. Perhaps, like Lucy of *Peanuts* comic fame, a booth with an “Advisor is in” sign could be created and moved around campus.

The reception area is also a great place to share information with students through posters and brochures. As proponents of assessment of academic advising, we find the reception area a wonderful place to share the results of the student surveys. These posters identify the learning outcome, what students told us through our assessment tools, and what actions the advising office pursued to improve our services to students. These are large posters that include key information, graphs, and photos.

In addition to decorating the reception area with information relevant to students, why not offer them information in a fun form. We are all familiar with fortune cookies with a few common fortunes. Try a different spin on this: a “tip jar.” This is a large wide-mouth container that invites the student “to take a tip from your advisor.” The tips can be philosophical or information relevant to campus written on paper and folded into a small square. We have watched many smiles emerge as a tip is revealed to the curious advisee.

In this cell phone era, a dedicated number—and dedicated advisor during certain hours—can go a long way toward keeping students informed of important academic advising related information.

But some students prefer to be advised at times that advisors prefer to sleep while other students do not have the time to visit the office for an appointment. Electronic tools are easily-accessible on most campuses and are one way to offer “non-traditional” advising. Many of today’s students are technologically savvy and enjoy interactive websites. We found that a short personal Web page for each advisor and staff member is a good draw for some students, and often times students actually request specific advisors based on the advisor’s personal Web page.

While advisors are familiar with academic jargon, students are sometimes confused by it: how can there be a college in a university? What is a credit hour? Why is a catalog year important? Two avenues can be pursued to facilitate student understanding of academic jargon. One is to create a “lingo link”, not unlike a glossary, that outlines the jargon used in your institution. The other is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page, perhaps arranged topically, where students can find answers to their questions.

Most students have email accounts so it makes sense to reach out to students using this electronic resource. The “quick answer advisor” could answer “advisor hotline” emails—emails that come to a generic account such as advise@yourschool.edu. The duty can also be rotated between full-time and peer advisors throughout the week. It is important to be respond in a timely manner, with a less-than-24-hour turn around for answers suggested. Interactive, real-time chat rooms are also a readily available resource that might be mediated by the “quick answer advisor” or a specific staff member. Chat rooms give the student immediate information from a “real” academic advisor.

One final note about electronic resources: while having a dedicated “advising hotline” is advantageous, privacy is important. Federal law protects students’ rights. Some information can not be released without verification of student identity. Nevertheless, the use of electronic resources is an important way to address many informational advising issues.

Creativity in academic advising helps invigorate advisors. It also grabs student attention and helps them be more receptive to the academic advising process. A variety of techniques can increase the visibility and utilization of

academic advising within the campus community and help Einstein know the date to withdraw.

Cite the above resource using APA style as:

Aiken-Wisniewski, S. and Allen, C.D. (2005). Did Einstein Know the Date to Withdraw? Techniques and Activities to Educate Your Campus Community About Academic Advising. Retrieved -insert today's date- from the *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* Web site.

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