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THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ADVISING DURING COVID-19

by
Justice J. Harris

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
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Thesis Chair: Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D., Assistant Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

Committee Members:

Tyrone McCombs, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Services
Andrew Tinnin, Ed.D., Associate Vice President of Student Life

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Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to my Mom, Dad, and my brother Jeremiah. They have been by my side through my entire college career always cheering me on in everything I do. I would not be where I am today without them. I love you guys so much!!!

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Abstract

Justice J. Harris
THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC ADVISING DURING COVID-19
2021-2022

Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

Academic Advisors are the connection between the students and the world of college. Having an academic advisor several students appreciate because they know they have their support and want them to succeed. The study will take at Rowan University, and it will show just how important the role of an academic advisor is and especially during COVID-19.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Academic advisors have been around for years, but it has not been recorded or identified when academic advising in higher education went into effect (Gordon, 2004). Academic advisors were discovered by the presidents and faculty members at John Hopkins University. They began by helping students pick their classes, as well as work through any personal issues they were going through (Gordon, 2004). Rudolph (1962) speaks on how the first-time academic advising was ever mentioned was in 1877 at John Hopkins University (Gordon, 2004). It was in 1877 where the first group of academic advisors were established (Gordon, 2004).

The responsibilities of an academic advisor have evolved over the years due to the students in which advisors encounter (Gordon, 2004). In 1995, The Ohio State University constructed a committee which stated how “academic advising is one of the most important elements contributing to the potential success of undergraduates” (The Ohio State University, 1995, as cited in Gordon, 2004, p.17). The Ohio State University saw the need for students to have academic advisors and made an effort to do all that they could so students would have the college experience they needed (Gordon, 2004). The number of academic advisors also increased over time because the number of students grew with more students wanting to attend school (Gordon, 2004). The existence of an academic advisor has become more known, as well as the services academic advisors offer (Gordon, 2004).

The role of an academic advisor is not an easy one but differently rewarding (Chickering, 1994). It is extremely important in the life of college students (Filson &

Whittington, 2013). Lowenstein (2005, p. 68) uses the example that “an academic advisor is like a coach” to the student during their college career. It has been said that the main focus of an academic advisor is to help guide students on their college educational journey (Brookston, 1972). Their role is so much more than just academics (Marsh, 2008). Academic advisors provide students with the steps, tools and resources needed for their future life/career goals (Brookston, 1972). They help their students see the bigger picture and plan of their whole college curriculum according to what is best for them (Marsh, 2008). Academic Advisors are not a career one hears a lot about until someone gets a job in this field (Wenham et. al, 2019), but they are essential (Filson & Whittington, 2013). Studies have shown that impactful and intentional interaction between students and their adviser is extremely beneficial (Johnson and Wang, 2011). The function of an academic advisor has grown over the years, just by the roles of academic advisors becoming more known (Filson & Whittington, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Center data has found that about 78% of the students who attend a college or university for more than one semester visit their academic advisors (2018). Out of the 78% , about 47% of the students state their experience with their academic advisor was beneficial (Center data, 2018). 44% present their experience with their advisor was okay, while 7% said their advising experience was disappointing (Center data, 2018).

It has become clear that colleges and universities need to pay closer attention to the data that is being collected (Center data, 2018). Research has shown that 22% of the student population reported they have never met with their academic advisor (Center data, 2018). Center data suggests that colleges and universities take the 22% of students

who have not met with their advisors and combine it with the 44% who state their experience was just okay; and the 7% who stated it was not a good experience because there was not much interaction with their advisors (2018). By doing this the data collected will show how much of a need there is for academic advisors and the services the advising office provides for the students (Center data, 2018).

It is not just the basics of handling coursework and scheduling, but the role has increased tasks and responsibilities in which some advisors are not willing to take (Filson & Whittington, 2013). Some faculty members many times find themselves pulled into being an academic advisor and not truly wanting the job (Filson & Whittington, 2013). Filson and Whittington (2013) have found several students are displeased with their advising experience because they can tell the advisors do not have a true passion and determination to assist them with all aspects of a college experience. Without an advisor being dedicated to their job as an advisor the ones who they are truly failing are the students (Filson & Whittington, 2013).

Significance of the Problem

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development describes many developmental tasks students experience throughout college as seven vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The vectors are, developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward independence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, as cited in A Guide to Theory: Florida State University's Higher Education Program). The vectors describe what the areas of development are and how students are faced with them and not even realize it (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development (1993) is one of the theories academic advisors should know and study because it brings to their attention not only how to relate more to their students on a deeper level, but it increases the advisors understanding of students as a whole (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how students are dealing with academic advising not being in person; and to outline the importance of having an academic advisor. The number of students to advisor relationships have changed due to COVID-19 (Hu, 2020).

Assumptions and Limitations

Academic Advising at some colleges and universities do not have the necessary resources and knowledge to give students a well-rounded advising experience. Due to this, the limitations will be that I am only sampling students at Rowan University. I am also only collecting data and information from sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students. I will not be using the entire population that makes up the student body because I am not studying the freshmen class. A total of 15,099 students were sent the survey email and nine of those emails bounced. There are nine students' responses that were not accounted for.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Advising: According NACADA (2014) Academic Advising is defined as a system put in into to practice where the advisor helps college students through their college career.

2. Academic Advisor: Is the individual who works alongside the student to ensure

they have a great college experience and get the most of it (Miller, 2012).

3. COVID-19: Also referred to as the coronavirus, is a disease that was developed from a virus named SARS-CoV-2 (CDC, 2021). It was first discovered in Wuhan, China and from there began to spread around the world (CDC, 2021). COVID-19 is a virus we have to learn to live with and has forever changed how the world operates (CDC, 2021).

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions to develop a plan to make colleges and universities see the need for an academic advisor and want this role to continue to grow.

- 1.) How Have Students Adapted to Virtual Advising?
- 2.) How Has COVID-19 Affected the Academic Experience for Students?
- 3.) How Comfortable will Students Feel once in-person Advising is available again?

Organization of Study

Chapter II will elaborate on the importance of academic advising and what the core aspects of their job responsibilities are. This chapter will also explain the responsibility of the universities when it comes to academic advisors and how to change the systems if they are not currently working. It will also go further into the topic explained in the introduction and bring a deeper understanding to why this issue has to be resolved. This chapter will also explain the impact of COVID-19 on academic advising.

Chapter III will illustrate the process in which this study will be concluded. From the data collected it will lay out the necessary steps and data that will be collected to

conclude with the issue of academic advising. This will be done with likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions.

Chapter IV will explain the findings from the survey taken by the selected student population and a breakdown of the percentages from each question. Also, contains the open-ended questions students answered as well on their experience with academic advising services.

Chapter V explains the conclusion from the study and the recommendations for future research and practice on this topic of academic advising.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Roles of Academic Advising

Students come to college scared, feeling alone, and more times than not they are debating to themselves if they should even be in college (White, 2015). The students come to college with the upbringing and teaching of their parents, family and loved ones (Kincanon, 2009). So many thoughts go through their brains, and it can truly make them give up before even starting the process of college because they are scared and do not want to make a mistake (Kocel, 2008). Students just have no idea what they are doing or even why they are in college (Lowenstein, 2005). They need someone to wheel them back in and get them on the right track (White, 2015). This is where an academic advisor comes into play (White, 2015). Academic advisors are majority of the time first people students encounter (Hunter & White, 2004). They are the glue to pull all the pieces together for the students (White, 2015). Academic advisors push their students to picture where they see themselves in the future and make a plan of action (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).

When the university and the advising department are lacking in this area, then the student is the one who is affected the most (White, 2015). Filson and Whittington (2013) explored this idea of academic advising and how much of an impact their role has on their students (2013). Filson and Whittington (2013) suggest the role of an academic advisor could be more critical than many have realized. When students are able to see their academic advisor as someone who will always be in their corner every step of the way it makes the relationship between the advisor and the student more effective

(Hemwall & Trachte, 2005; Lowenstein, 2005; Melander, 2005; NACADA, 2007b; Rawlins & Rawlins, 2005).

Ruth Darling (2006) author of *The Academic Adviser* makes reference to the NACADA journal's preamble (the Concept of Academic Advising), states "through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community" (p. 92). Darling focuses on how academic advising is not for just academics; it also focuses on success for students long-term. It serves the university as well as the student no justice if all they are paying thousands of dollars to just get an okay education. But what about their growth, character and becoming a better version of themselves? When students start college, they come in one way, when they leave there should be some type of change that occurs, and it is somewhat of a reflection of the university if the student does not show even a little change.

Darling (2006) also discusses how academic advisors do their jobs. The job description of an academic advisor can vary based on the specific agenda, and daily tasks (Darling, 2006). However, colleges and universities need to understand how important academic advisors are and not make their responsibilities so great, they cannot be supportive to their students (Darling, 2006). This ties right into her first point of having a strong foundation. If there is not an academic advising curriculum/procedure to follow, how can advisors do their jobs effectively? There has to be a roadmap put in place to help students. Allen and Smith (2008) touched on this in their study on academic advising and

they discovered many advisors were not the best advisors they could be because they were not trained on how to do so.

Darling (2006) references the end goals of the advising department; the most disappointing part of an advisor's job is a student transfer to another institution because they did not feel welcomed. Advisors are really the ones who are the voice for the students. They are supposed to make sure each student is going to have a well-rounded college experience.

Core Aspects of Advising

According to the National Academic Advising Association (1979), academic advising takes place in "situations in which an institutional representative gives insight or direction to a college student about an academic, social, or personal matter" (NACADA, 1979) Academic Advising is one of the key elements needed in the world of higher education. Without this role, the success rates for students will be lower than the expected outcome at the end of their college career (He et al., 2016). National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 1979) describes the three structures an academic advising department can use to assist their students. The structures are as follows: centralized, decentralized, and shared structures (NACADA, 1979). A centralized structure focuses more on having faculty serve as advisors and there is no real separation between instructing and advising (NACADA, 1979). The faculty has to do both jobs. Decentralized is a structure we may see more of in higher education institutions (NACADA, 1979). This structure allows for each advising program at a university to be separate and concentrate on the students within their respective departments (NACADA,

1979). A shared structure is a combination of the two structures, centralized and decentralized (NACADA, 1979).

This will make all the difference when the university evaluates their graduation rates, which may have either increased or decreased over a period of time. It has been proven that academic advising has a lot to do with the increase in graduation rates (Lowe et al., 2001). Unfortunately, the role of the academic advisor is sometimes looked down upon and not seen as a vital role (Filson et al., 2013). However, the role of an academic advisor is extremely critical and should not be taken lightly (Filson & Whittington, 2013). It is important for each university to have in place a solid academic advising structure.

The Global Community for Academic Advising covers three core aspects of academic advising in which the NACADA concept suggests are key for a strong advising curriculum. The core aspects are: curriculum of academic advising, what advising deals with the pedagogy of academic advising, and student learning outcomes of academic advising (NACADA, 2006). Curriculum is where higher education programs are lacking when it comes to advising. Curriculum is what the advising departments deals with, the structure is of how advisors are. Pedagogy is the actual practice of advising, student learning outcomes, and what feedback does the advising receive back from students. If there is not a strong foundation for advisors to follow, there will be no success (Darling, 2006). Part of the whole reason why advising departments are failing their students is because the majority of the time they are making the curriculum up as they go along. They do not fully understand their role and how they should be going about it. Darling (2006) stresses how important and necessary it is for a foundation of academic advising

to be strongly built for students to gain all they can from their advisors. Without it there is no academic advising going on at all. There are only faculty/administrators going with the flow and not knowing how to properly “advise” students on their next steps. If there is no curriculum built to help advisors be the best they can be for their students and the whole reason for the academic advisor goes down the drain (Allen & Smith, 2008).

Appreciative Advising

Hutson and Bloom (2007), express that appreciative advising creates a close and harmonious relationship between the advisor and their student. This type of advising allows for students to learn more about themselves, find their what they like, their interests and maybe what some of their dreams are for themselves (Hutson & Bloom, 2007). There are six stages of appreciative advising that an academic advisor should use during their advising session (Bloom et.al, 2008). The stages are as follows: (Bloom et. al., 2008).

Stage One: Creating small communication with the student and having a light- hearted

Stage Two: Dig a little deeper into the conversation and ask questions that focus on the strengths and passions of the student

Stage Three: This is the stage in which the advisor and student both put their heads together and begin to brainstorm based on the information the students has given what they want to do for as far as a career

Stage Four: The advisor will give the students steps on and tips on how to achieve their goals and be victorious in it

Stage Five: Being the biggest cheerleader for the students. As they go through the motions and hit different obstacles along the way; the advisor is right there to lend a helping hand

Stage Six: Reminds the students to never settle for anything other than their best. Once they finish one goal, it is on to the next. The advisor is always getting the students think bigger and better. To always know how much the world needs all they have to offer.

These stages form a productive, effective and compassionate relationship between the advisor and the student (Bloom et. al, 2008).

Knowing the Students

An academic advisor is responsible for sometimes a large number of students at a time. Being able to understand the individual needs of each student is what makes the job of advising so significant (Kim & Feldman, 2011). Nowadays, students have much on their plate. They are trying to figure out their careers, work, maybe switching schools so they would be a transfer student or trying to arrange transportation to school because they are a commuter (McClaren, 2004). Some students may also be attending school part-time because they have to work or cannot afford to go full-time (McClaren, 2004). Keeping the student on top of all they have to balance is an influential portion of an academic advisor position (Hollis, 2009). The views of what a “traditional student” used to be or should be has changed (Kim & Feldman, 2011). In the times we are facing, once you hit a certain age you have to start working to collect income (Kim & Feldman, 2011). Wanting to go to school and still handle all your other responsibilities can hard but manageable with an academic advisors to help put all the parts in place (Kim & Feldman, 2011).

Bloom (2005), states that academic advising is a “collaborative partnership”. This collaborative partnership centers in on making sure students learn about themselves and where they see themselves later down the line (Bloom, 2005).

Advising the Non-Traditional Student/ Adult Learner

There are studies and research that have shown in 2006, the non-traditional student population was roughly about forty percent of the traditional college student (Paulson & Boeke, 2006). The non-traditional student is becoming more and more common because many adults want to go back to college and better themselves (Redfern, 2008). As these adult learners are continuing in their own education goals, it is necessary for an academic advisor to see the different in learning styles and what type of support the students will need (CAEL, 2004). These students have their own concerns especially with going back to school so late in their eyes (Redfern, 2008). Bland (2004) states “ The Adult learners bring a unique perspective to the classroom and are recognized as serious learners who are as entitled to as much of a successful collegiate experience as the traditional-age student” (p. 90). Regardless of when they decide to go back to school and get an education they desire all the same support any other student would receive (Bland, 2004 p. 90). They are no different (Bland, 2004).

Universities Responsibilities

Lowenstein (2013) expresses how it is the responsibility of colleges and universities to gear their academic advising department towards the ultimate goals for the students. The goal of the college or university should be incorporated in the structure of the academic advising development (Lowenstein, 2013). Without it the academic

advising department will not be able to be the best it can be for their students (Lowenstein, 2013).

Lowe and Toney (2001) conducted a study. It tested the progress of academic advising. As it has been discussed throughout this paper, advising departments do not have administrators who are just advisors. They could possibly be faculty members who have to be advisors as well. Lowe and Toney (2001) make a note that individuals in this position are lacking the skills needed to be advisors because their strength is in teaching.

Professional development training is needed to ensure each time a student meets with their advisor they are receiving all the help they need. The department of academic advising is also subject to changing over a period of time depending on what is occurring in the world (Hu, 2020). When the university takes notice of what the concerns are, students will have a stronger opportunity to be successful (Hu, 2020).

The way in which a university operates as a whole speaks volumes to the institution's dedication to their students (Darling, 2006). Therefore, all the departments at the university should follow the same pattern of putting the students always first for a better college experience (Darling, 2006). In order for the student to have a sense of belonging, advisors must be involved in the plan for student engagement and development on the college campus (Darling, 2006).

In 2000, a handbook was created to assist academic advisors in their advising process (Gordon & Habley). The handbook addresses that the advising department and curriculum have to lineup with the overview of the college or university (Gordon & Habley, 2000). Having this in place makes the system of academic advising and the college or university appear are structured.

Problems with Current Advising Methods/Models

Structures and Problems

Being an academic advisor, part of the role is to be culturally competent (Strayhorne, 2014). In the world of today that is becoming more diverse, especially on a college campus, an academic advisor should be able to assist their students through not only understanding their culture but the cultures around them (Strayhorne, 2014). Strayhorne (2014 p. 59) uses the term “cultural navigator” because be able to become more educated on other cultures makes for a more diverse student as well.

Many advisors forget how important the responsibility of an academic advisor really is for students (Hagen & Jordan, 2008; Lowenstein, 2005). Filson and Whittington (2013) start their study by analyzing how students who enroll in higher education institutions truly feel about their academic advisors (Filson & Whittington, 2013). They were very surprised to hear how many students were not receiving enough support from their advisors as they thought they would have. Filson and Whittington (2013) discovered students felt as if their advisors were only concerned with helping them academically. Students have more than just academic issues that they may need someone to help them work through it (Filson and Whittington, 2013). Students in Filson and Whittington’s (2013) study expressed how when it came to personal development and challenges of life, the advisors were no help.

Allen and Smith’s (2008) study came up with a few ideas on why academic advising across the board is not as successful as it could be. The research asked faculty to complete a survey on the approach and attitudes they have towards their students. The faculty were not the best advisors because they did not know how to be a good advisor

and assist their students in the way they may need (Allen & Smith, 2008). The data from the survey also showed how some faculty did not feel they should be held responsible for the type of advising students were receiving (Allen & Smith, 2008). This was exactly why Allen and Smith did the study. The findings from their study showed a huge downfall in the collaboration between academic advisors and students and this definitely is an area Allen and Smith (2008) would like to see some change.

Problems with Dual Faculty and Advisor Roles

Students have been very disappointed in academic advising because their advisors were not trained on how to be an “effective” advisor (Allen and Smith, 2008). At every university the advising department can vary. Some may have a separate team who are just dedicated to academic advising. Allen and Smith (2008) believe one of the main issues why faculty who serve as advisors is the lack the training needed to support students in “all” aspects of their well-being.

This is the area where advisors truly fall short. They forget how valuable the lives of the students they work with are and they just want to push them along (Allen & Smith, 2008). Allen and Smith (2008) discovered in their study from the responses many of the faculty just did not want to be advisors. They did not believe it was their sole responsibility to make sure the students were getting the “proper” type of advising (Allen & Smith, 2008). An academic advisor is responsible for creating a safe atmosphere for the students to know without any hesitation their advisor is right by their side (Allen & Smith). If this is not the case, a huge downfall in the relationship between the advisor and the student becomes a bigger issue (Allen & Smith, 2008). This is one of the many issues Allen and Smith (2008) discuss through their study and the need for some programs to be

altered is essential to the impact academic advising will have overall for students. Faculty and administrators want to see their students grow and do well for it is a reflection of the university as a whole (Abernathy, 2001).

Impact on Student Success and Retention

A highly structured academic advising department positions the students coming to the college or university up for greater accomplishments during the duration of their time in college (Center for Publication Education, 2012, as cited in Academic Advising Approaches Drake et, al., 2013). Advisors have found that using a Socratic questioning is the go to advising method for their sessions (Lowenstein, 2005). According to Kuhlmann (2005 p. 37), Socratic questioning can be defined as “ a method of teaching” that allows students to be able to work through a series of questions in order to come to conclusion about their future outcomes and the steps that will be necessary to get there.

Darling (2015) found the need for professors, department heads and chairs to meet regularly in order to gain a better understanding of what the students are going to be faced with and the expectations for students. It is also part of the advisor’s job to be able to suggest different teachers and professors. If the advisor does not believe the student will do well with one professor and better with another (Darling, 2015) then they have the right to say so.

Eric White (2015) continues with the focus on academic advising and how it must aim to accommodate, advise, and mentor their students in a way that they are able to set goals for themselves and have the necessary skills and guidance to achieve them. Most of the student’s success and retention rates may depend on how much their advisors are involved in their lives. Filson and Whittington (2013) explored this idea to see how much

of a difference having an academic advisor makes. They looked into other universities where the role of academic advisor was not as strong, and the well-being of their students was not their priority (Filson & Whittington, 2013). From the data collected, the difference they saw was that students felt like their advisor just did not care enough for them and there was no real support (2013). Being successful in academics is key, but if the students themselves are not okay and the challenges of life are getting the best of them, the advisor has to step in (Filson & Whittington, 2013).

Speaking from experience, knowing which professors work well with a student is so critical. If the professor's style is fast paced and the student needs more of a slow pace and more detail, then the advisor has to be strong enough to do their job and "advise" or steer their student to the professor who will be a better fit. This will help the student be successful and have a sense of accomplishment. There is so much more to academic advising than just helping students pick the right classes and this is where the advising role is failing (Hagen & Jordan, 2008).

The success of the school a lot times can reflect the number of students they have graduate in a given year (Kim & Feldman, 2011). With the proper recommendations and strategic advising students should be able to graduate with all coursework requirements completed (Kim & Feldman, 2011). All students graduate at different times but part of an academic advisors role is to make sure their students graduate successfully and help with any hurdles that come along the way (Kim & Feldman, 2011).

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 came at an unexpected time and no one could predict how long it would last. It forced the educational system across the world to make changes and find

ways to still have students succeed (Naughton, 2021). Many students have lost family members, loved ones and lost a sense of self just dealing with this new normal they are living in. Students have to learn how to navigate through life and everyday tasks sometimes alone. This is where an academic advisor must truly step up to the plate and be the assistance students need during this extremely challenging time.

Higher education was also affected. Schools and universities were shut down and all educational training and advising switched to a virtual learning format (June, 2020). Academic advisors began performing sessions online due to the restrictions of social distancing (Wicks, 2020). Xiaodan Hu (2020) examines this new world COVID-19 has caused us to adapt to. Higher education will forever be changed because of this virus and the number of lives it has affected (Hu, 2020). Universities' academic advising departments are going to need to begin actively thinking ahead about what higher education will look like (Hu, 2020). Hu (2020) suggests that with the advisors not being able to meet with their student face to face, the student to advisor relationship is definitely not the same.

Hu's (2020) study examines some key components that need discussion post COVID-19. The key components are: virtual connection, pre and post advising reflections, and in-person advising (now with several colleges and universities back in person). Universities must think about how academic advising will operate with the virus still being around, and ensure students are still getting the advising support they need and feel safe (Hoover, 2020).

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

The study will be conducted at Rowan University, in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan was established in 1923 and has grown from a teacher preparation school to a comprehensive research university (Rowan Fast Facts, 2020). The institution has also been ranked by the U.S. News & World Report for being the best national public research university in the nation (Rowan Fast Facts, 2020). Rowan Fast Facts (2020) defines the institution as a Carnegie-classified national doctoral research institution dedicated to excellence in undergraduate education. The current student population for both undergraduate and graduate levels at Rowan University is 19,678 (Rowan Fast Facts, 2020). Of that 19,678-student population there are 15,963 undergraduate students, 2,466 graduate students and 1,249 are professional/medical students (Rowan Fast, Facts, 2020).

Population and Sampling

The population that I sampled are non-freshmen college students. This would include: sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students. There I focused on the students who have a little more experience with academic advising during their higher education career. I sampled students who are further in their education and know the benefits of an academic advisor. The sampling method I used is random sampling which is known as “probability sampling” as McMillan describes (2016, p.115). This type of sampling will allowed students of the sampling population to be selected at random for the experiment of this study. I collected data from the fall 2021 population which is about

15,099 students according to Rowan University dashboard. Of that 15,099 the target sample size of 375 was calculated at a 95% confidence interval and a margin error of 5%.

Data Instrumentation and Collection

I issued a survey consisting of likert scale, multiple choice, and open-ended questions (McMillian, 2016). I asked questions based on the student population and what is happening in the world today in regard to advising. The timeline for the data collection happened during spring 2022. The survey was pilot tested. The survey went out for two weeks and one reminder was sent. From the survey I was able to see how academic advising improves and if/when Covid-19 begins to fade away and how returning back to in person will be. These questions allowed me to gather the data and then see any similarities the students may have in common. I based my survey questions off an existing survey from State University of New York Pittsburgh.

Data Analysis

In order for the data collected to be complete, this study will take a quantitative research approach (Fowler & Cosenza, 2013). All questions from the survey will open-ended and multiple questions will be answered fully (Fowler & Cosenza, 2013). The questions not fully answered will be removed from the analysis to ensure I will have accurate information. I will use frequency tables to display the results I receive from my participants (McMillan, 2). From the frequency tables I will be able to see how the participants answered my questions and where answers were similar but also different. I centered in on the participants/ students' perceptions of how academic advising changed during to COVID-19. The responses gave suggestions on how to make advising better for the future. I also focused on the challenges that will come along with dealing with this

new way of academic advising and how it can be better (McMillan, 2016). From all this data I collected the information will further assist me in the overall goal of my study of academic advising and the effects it has on college students.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of Sample

The sample for this study consists of 15,099 students who are not freshmen. The survey was emailed to 15,099 students and of those 15,099 the target sample size was 375. There were 9 emails that bounced back and 553 of the surveys were started. Out of those 15099 emails 483 were completed at a response rate of 31.2%.

Findings

The survey consisted of questions surrounding the impact of academic advising and how students felt with their experience overall. The survey questions were open-ended and multiple choice questions. This allowed students an opportunity to explain their experience in greater detail. The tables below show the results of the responses from the survey.

Survey Question 1

In survey question 1, students answered yes and no depending on whether they used the academic advising services at Rowan University during the college career.

Table 1

Have You Used Academic Advising at Rowan University?

	#	<i>f</i>
Yes	395	88%
No	52	12%
Total	447	100%

Survey Question 2

In survey question 2, the participants choose whether or not they believe their academic advising experience was beneficial or not.

Table 2

How Satisfied Are You With Your Academic Advising Experience in General?

	#	<i>f</i>
Very satisfied	100	36%
Somewhat satisfied	76	27%
Somewhat dissatisfied	62	22%
Very dissatisfied	40	15%
Total	278	100%

Survey Question 3

For survey question 3, participants of the study answered the question based if the academic advising support they received during the pandemic was enough or more could have been done.

Table 3

Do You Believe You Received the Proper Amount of Academic Advising During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

	#	<i>f</i>
Yes	119	43%
Somewhat	71	26%
No	89	31%
Total	279	100%

Survey Question 4

In survey question 4, participants were to say whether or not they agreed that the academic advising process was able to adapt and adjust to the pandemic or not.

Table 4

Throughout 2020, Do You Believe the Advising Department Adjusted Well to the Pandemic?

	#	<i>f</i>
Yes	133	48%
Somewhat	85	30%
No	60	22%
Total	278	100%

Survey Question 5

Survey question 5 asked students to choose out of the options if their advisors were still able to relate to them being virtual and not being in-person for advising sessions like they were used to. Did they still feel their advisors were caring for them?

Table 5

Throughout 2020, Do You Believe the Advising Department Still Related Well Their Students?

	#	<i>f</i>
Yes	126	45%
Somewhat	82	29%
No	70	26%
Total	278	100%

Survey Question 6

Survey question 6 asked students to select what they believed the responsibilities of an academic advisor were.

Table 6
Academic Advisors are Responsible For?

	#	<i>f</i>
Assisting students through their academic experience	61	22%
Providing students with clubs, organizations, and committees for them to get involved in	1	>1%
Going over their academics and being a listening ear	5	26%
All of the above	209	75%

Note. Respondents could choose more than one response for this question.

Survey Question 7

Survey question 7 allows students to choose if the interaction and relationship they had with their advisor, and if there was strong communication.

Table 7

Which Statement Would You Say Best Describes the Relationship and Interaction You Have With Your Academic Advisor?

	#	f
I initiate contact with my advisor via email, phone, or office visits	151	54%
My advisor reaches out via email or the university scheduling portal	17	6%
Sometimes I initiate, and sometimes my advisor does	86	32%
We do not meet at all	22	8%
Total	276	100%

Survey Question 8

Survey question 8, let students give some insight on how their advising sessions went and if they were pleased with the session.

Table 8

Which Statement Best Describes the Meeting Session Between You and Your Advisor ?

	#	f
I leave my advising session feeling good	109	40%
My advisor does not help me at all, and the session only lasts a few minutes	91	34%
I have a good relationship with my advisor, and they have shown me they care	71	26%
Total	271	100%

Survey Question 9

Survey question 9, explains how often students meet with their academic advisors and what their experience was.

Table 9
Which Statement Describes How Often You Meet?

	#	f
I meet with my advisor every month regardless of if I have an issue or not	5	2%
We meet at the beginning of each semester	52	19%
I meet with my advisor when I need to; just have to schedule an appointment or call them	191	69%
I have never met with my advisor	28	10%
Total	276	100%

In the survey there were also open-ended questions that allowed students to explain in greater detail their advising experience. The questions focused on giving students an opportunity to say whether or not they thought their academic advising experience was beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic. But also, if they would feel comfortable with in-person advising once college and universities were back to full capacity. The answers from these questions varied and some students did not think the

advising experience was the best it could be. The responses stated that many students struggled with online advising and it was not a good experience. But there were some positive feedback from the online advising as well. The responses in regard to students being okay with having advising sessions back in person, some said they would if masks and social distancing precautions were taken. Knowing that importance of an academic advisor is extremely crucial especially during the times we are in now. Whether it is in-person or online students still need proper advising.

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations

Summary of the Study

The survey was conducted at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey during the Spring 2022 academic year. The survey was sent out to 15,099 students. The survey was completed by 483 students. The purpose of this study is to bring awareness to the importance of academic advising especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

How Have Students Adapted to Virtual Advising? From the answers in the survey, many of the participants stated that some students struggled with the transition to virtual advising. With the uncertainty of COVID-19 and then having to go to a completely remote platform. Virtual platforms are not always what works for every student. But being that COVID-19 came with little preparation, virtual classes and advising sessions were what had to be done; and it was a challenge for several students to make the change.

Research Question 2

How Has COVID-19 Affected the Academic Experience for Students? COVID-19 definitely effected the advising experience because it called for a new plan of action. Students who answered the survey found it harder to interact with their academic advisor. There was not much communication and some students said they did not even know who their academic advisor was because they did not communicate with them at all. Students who did not hear from their academic advisors just did not feel important or valued.

But on the other hand, you had students answer the survey questions stating how supportive their academic advisor was and the communication was great. They felt heard and the sessions were very effective. The advising session felt the same as in person and the only difference was that they were on Zoom or WebEx now.

Research Question 3

How Comfortable will Students Feel Once In-Person Advising Is Available

Again? Based on the data collected from the survey, the answers varied. Some students were okay with in person advising when colleges and universities opened again as long as masks were worn, and social distancing was being practiced. There were also a few statements to the open-ended questions and students did not have a good experience with their academic advisor. So, if they had to meet with them in person they would not feel comfortable regardless of COVID-19 and they would rather to have to meeting time with them at all.

Recommendations for Practice

From the results of the study, I recommend:

- 1.) Colleges and Universities having quarterly academic advising conferences and seminars to increase the awareness of the field.
- 2.) Academic Advising departments should create manuals and handbooks for academic advisors to have on hand.
- 3.) Academic Advising departments should also have monthly trainings centered around the issues and struggles students are facing especially on a college campus and how academic advisors can help them.

4.) Monthly or quarterly anonymous surveys should go out to students asking how they feel about their academic advising experiences.

Recommendation for Further Research

From the results of the study, I recommend:

- 1.) Look through this research and see what other information is missing about the field of academic advising.
- 2.) Research on academic advising should be more accessible to students on the college campus.

Conclusion Based Upon Findings

Academic Advising is needed in the world of higher education. There is no way students will be successful without the extra assistance of an advisor to help them along their way academically. Noticing how crucial an academic advisor truly is will not only help the student, but it will allow for the academic programs overall to be better. It is so important for the foundation of an academic advising program to be ready and willing to cater to every student they may meet in their journey. Every student has a story, and every student has the right to be heard and assisted through their academic experience. No student should leave an institution feeling as if they were not cared for or helped. Every student's life is a variable to the formation of a great future, and they should be seen as such. The world of academic advising is a must for the betterment of the student.

Based on the information collected from the surveys the percentages of no answers were not as high as I expected them to be. But I was glad to see some students felt their academic advising experience during the COVID-19 pandemic was a good one. Being that the world as a whole went into hybrid mode, I expected there to be more no

answers than yes answers in response to this question. I was glad to see the percentage of students who do not meet with their advisor was not as great, meaning that hopefully most students were having communication with their academic advisors.

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Appendix

IRB Approval Letter



DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111
IRB Chair Person: Dr. Ane Johnson
IRB Director: Eric Gregory
Effective Date: January 3, 2022

Notice of Approval - Initial

Study ID: PRO-2021-656
Title: The Importance of Academic Advising
Principal Investigator: Stephanie Lezotte
Study Coordinator: Justice Harris
Co-Investigator(s): Justice Harris
Sponsor: Department Funded

Submission Type: Initial
Submission Status: Exempt
Approval Date: January 3, 2022
Review Type: Exempt

Exempt Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Pregnant Women, Human Fetus, and Neonates Code: N/A
Pediatric/Children Code: N/A

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
- 2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
- 2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.
- 3a. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.
- 3b. Human Subjects Research Training: Proper training in the conduct of human subjects research must be current and not expired. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator and the investigator to complete training when expired. Any modifications and renewals will not be approved until training is not expired and current.
4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.
5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:
<https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>
6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:
<https://research.rowan.edu/officeofresearch/compliance/irb/index.html>
7. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.
8. Completion of Study: Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.

9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.
10. Letter Comments: There are no additional comments.

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