



[Current Articles](#) | [Archives](#) | [Search](#)

Integrating career and academic advising

[Examples of career advising centers](#)

Integrating Career and Academic Advising: Mastering the Challenge

Authored By: [Betsy McCalla-Wriggins](#)

2009

Integrating career and academic advising, while not a new concept, is now discussed at more institutions. New economic realities may be the driving force behind recent decisions to integrate career and academic advising, however, these challenges present unique opportunities to better serve our students.

1. a definition of career advising
2. the impact of integrating career and academic advising on students
3. specific actions that an individual advisor or an advising administrator can take to facilitate this integration
4. resources on integrating career and academic advising

Definition of Career Advising

In order to consider the why and how of integrating career advising in academic advising, it is important to clearly define career advising. Virginia Gordon (2006) describes it as a dynamic, interactive process that “helps students understand how their personal interests, abilities, and values might predict success in the academic and career fields they are considering and how to form their academic and career goals accordingly” (p.12). It is different from the more psychologically intense career counseling that seeks to assist students with the complex career-related personal concerns. (Gordon, 2006).

Impact on Students

There are a number of compelling reasons to integrate career and academic advising, but

supporting students as they make meaning of their curricular and co-curricular activities is an especially important one. Astin (2007) noted that students continue to report that one of the major reasons they attend college is to get a better job. However, many students are not able to articulate what that “better job” is. Since students often are not able to describe their skills, interests, values, and passions, they do not have a personal reference point from which to evaluate potential academic and career options. In addition, they seem reluctant to seek out assistance in making these very important decisions. As Hunter and White (2004) point out “academic advising, well developed and appropriately accessed, is perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students sustained interactions with a caring and concerned adult” (p. 22). Therefore, academic advisors are uniquely positioned to assist students in making wise academic and career decisions; decisions that can impact the rest of their lives.

Almost 40 years ago, Terry O’Banion (1972) recognized the need to integrate career and academic advising and made that explicit in his description of the academic advising process. The five steps included in that process are:

1. exploration of life goals
2. exploration of vocational goals
3. selection of academic program
4. selection of courses
5. scheduling courses

Students currently have significantly more career options than when O’Banion initially presented this approach; therefore the need for integrating career advising within academic advising is even more critical today. Students who know who they are and understand the various vocational options that support their strengths, skills, interests, and passions, have greater potential to make academic decisions that have personal meaning. Additionally, they are more likely to be retained and persist to graduation.

Another reason to integrate career and academic advising is that “students enter higher education without the benefit of adequate career guidance in high school” (Kuhn and Padek, 2009, p. 3). Gordon (2006) reinforces this notion and reflects that “all students need career advising” (p. 5). This comes as no surprise to advisors who work with students, both undecided and declared, who do not have clear academic or career goals, or whose reasons for selecting a specific major may include one of the following: my best friend chose this major; my parents selected it for me; it sounds interesting; or the job prospects are good. These realities reinforce the need for institutions to be pro-active and intentional in creating structures and systems where students are routinely asked to explore and reflect on how they can make personal meaning of both their curricular and co-curricular experiences. If we in higher education do not accept this opportunity and responsibility, who will? What contributions will be lost to the world

because students were not able to discover where and how to use their unique talents and gifts?

Integrating career and academic advising also has the potential to support students and graduates as they navigate the ever changing world of work. This integration provides students with the opportunity to learn about themselves, to evaluate academic and career options within the context of self knowledge, to explore multiple options in a safe environment, and to develop important decision making skills. These skills are critical and will be utilized multiple times throughout their lives as graduates seek meaningful employment in a world where change is constant.

Steps to Facilitate Integration: Academic Advisor

For advisors who want (or have been directed) to integrate career advising in academic advising sessions, there are specific steps that can lead to this integration. The first step is to recognize the similarities and differences between career and academic advising. Using the conceptual, informational, and relational elements in an advisor development program (Ford, 2007) can assist in this comparison.

Conceptual elements refer to what an advisor needs to understand. Both academic and career advising are grounded in student development and student learning theories with career advising adding career development theory. The informational element refers to what an advisor needs to know and this is where advisors may find the greatest differences. Academic advisors have a vast knowledge of the institution's academic policies, procedures, degree and GPA requirements, but may not have specific information about careers, skills required for certain jobs, employment options in different fields, or strategies to obtain employment. The relational element describes how advisors need to behave and are the same for both academic and career advising. Some examples of these skills include listening, reflecting, communicating, challenging, supporting, caring, and referring (Burton and McCalla-Wriggins, 2009).

The next step is to identify those elements where additional competencies are needed as well as resources that will enhance those areas of expertise. Campus resources include career center staff. When they work together, staff in both units can share information about services, discuss what career advising components to incorporate in academic advising sessions, determine when students need to be referred, and how to further collaborate to support students as well as each other. There are many off campus resources also available and several are described later in this article.

Once resources have been identified and essential competencies developed, the third step is to develop a specific plan to integrate career advising in academic advising. The plan can begin with reframing the questions asked in the advising session. Rather than "What major are

you considering?” pose one of these questions: “As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?”, “What would you do if you knew you would not fail?” (Roberts, 2007, p. 97), or “If you never had to work at all, how would you spend your time?” Advisors may also find Gordon’s “3-I Process” helpful in developing a plan. Inquire, Inform, and Integrate are the three phases Gordon suggests advisors use to assist students as they explore and make decisions about career advising issues. (Gordon, 2006, p. 45)

Steps to Facilitate Integration: Advising Administrator

For the advising administrator who has decided (or been directed) to have advisors integrate career advising in academic advising sessions, there are some critical issues that must be addressed before supporting advisors in the steps outlined above. Even when advisors are convinced of the need for, and value of, this integration there are often underlying and unarticulated feelings that can interfere with a smooth transition to this new approach. Feeling uncertain about how to provide career advising, fearful that they will not be able to do what is expected, worried about having the time to add this to their advising sessions, and anxious about the process of change are emotions some advisors may experience. Advisors who are not convinced of the value of the integration may not verbalize those feelings and their resistance may be demonstrated through disengagement or an unwillingness to participate in professional development activities.

The first step an advising administrator can take to facilitate this integration is to meet with advisors and discuss several issues including the:

1. rationale to integrate career and academic advising;
2. expectations of the advisors in this process;
3. timeline for this integration;
4. resources available to support integration;
5. feelings advisors may be experiencing.

Most likely, the administrator will not have answers to all the questions raised during this time, but acknowledging that and seeking those answers may help ease some of the anxiety.

After articulating the above issues, the administrator should meet individually with each advisor several times. Administrators can demonstrate a commitment to helping advisors succeed by asking them to share their thoughts and feelings about this new initiative, soliciting their ideas about how to facilitate this integration for both the individual and the unit, and working collaboratively with each advisor to develop a professional development plan. For advisors who continue to demonstrate an unwillingness to support this new initiative, these meetings provide an important opportunity where the administrator can clarify expectations and discuss the reality of failure to meet expectations. These meetings, as well as on-going discussions in staff meetings, will provide the administrator with important information for the creation of an overall

professional development plan for the unit.

Advising administrators also need to provide resources including time and money so professional development plans can be implemented. Both on and off campus resources should be considered as well as time allocated in the advisor's schedule to take advantage of these resources. In addition to this resource support, feedback systems must be established so advisors can assess the progress they are making in meeting these new responsibilities and how to obtain additional assistance and support if needed.

Resources

Providing advisors with resources to integrate career advising in academic advising is critical to success. The selected resources described here include the following: on campus; publications; electronic/web-based; and professional associations.

There are many resources on campus to assist in this process of integration. As mentioned earlier, staff in offices that currently provide career advising and/or career counseling are excellent resources. These offices most likely have print and electronic resources where students can 1) engage in self assessment, 2) obtain career information and employment projections, and 3) acquire job search strategy techniques. Learning how to access and utilize these resources as well as when to refer a student will benefit everyone. Advisors could also take career development or career theory courses offered in graduate programs at many institutions or ask the professor to provide professional development activities for the advising unit. Another option is to enroll in the online career development course in the [NACADA/Kansas State University graduate certificate program in academic advising](#).

Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook also includes exemplary practices in the integration of career and academic advising from a variety of institutions; selected chapters in both the 2008 and 2000 editions of the handbook also address this integration. *The Handbook of career advising* (2009) and *Career Advising: An academic advisor's guide* by Virginia Gordon's (2006) are books that cover the topic extensively.

The NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources provides links (see "Resources" at the top of this page) to several pages that directly relate to career advising integration. Search topics within the Clearinghouse include: career advising resources, integrated centers, and centers that integrate academic advising and careers. The National Resource Center for First-Year Students and Students in Transition produced *Academic and Career Advising: Keys to Student Success* is available on DVD. *Making Career Advising Integral to Academic Advising* is a CD from the NACADA Web cast series.

In addition to electronic resources provided by professional associations like NACADA and the National Career Development Association, workshops on the integration of career and academic advising are presented at state, regional and national conferences. If attending a

conference is not an option, a listing of the workshops and the presenters is often available from the association. Talking with others who have experienced the integration of career and academic advising can be extremely valuable and can also provide even more resources.

Conclusion

Integrating career and academic advising is an important consideration for advisors who seek to better assist students as they make decisions that will impact the rest of their lives. As reported in a 2007 NACADA survey, 74% of the advisors who responded agreed that helping students make career decisions was important to their role as academic advisors. In addition, 79% wanted to know more about how to effectively help students make career decisions. When advisors have a clear definition of career advising, understand the similarities and differences between academic and career advising, obtain additional resources and competencies, and work collaboratively with others on campus, they can move toward this integration with confidence.

Director Emeritus [Betsy McCalla-Wriggins](#)
Career and Academic Planning Center
Rowan University (NJ)

Note: This article was part of a [series](#) that celebrated NACADA 30th anniversary. In this [series](#) NACADA members built upon the work done within the book *Advising as a Comprehensive Campus Process* highlighting the important connections advisors make across campus

References

Astin, A. W. (2007). *The American freshman: National norms for fall 2006*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute.

Burton, D. N., & McCalla-Wriggins, B. (in press, 2009). Integrated career and academic advising programs. In K. Hughey, D. N. Burton, J. Damminger, & B. McCalla-Wriggins (Eds.) *The Handbook of Career Advising*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ford, S.S. (2007). *The essential steps for developing the content of an effective advisor training and development program*. Retrieved from <http://nacada.ksu.edu/tabid/3318/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/584/article.aspx>.

Gordon, V. N. (2006). *Career advising: An academic advisor's guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gordon, V. N., Habley, W.R. & Associates (2000). *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook (second edition)*. Gordon, V. N., Habley, W. R., & Grites, T. J. (2008).

Hunter, M.S., & White, E.R. (2004, March-April). Could fixing academic advising fix higher education?, *About Campus* 20-25.

Kuhn, T., & Padak, G. (2009). From the co-editors: reflecting on 30 years of growth and the future., *NACADA Journal* 29(1), 3-4.

NACADA Career Advising Survey. (2007). Results retrieved from <http://nacada.ksu.edu/tabid/3318/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/570/article.aspx>

[*Making Career Advising Integral to Academic Advising*](#). NACADA Web cast. (2008).

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. (2007). Academic & Career Advising: Keys to Student Success teleconference. Information retrieved from <http://www.sc.edu/fye/publications/video/all/index.html>

[*O'Banion, T. \(1972\). An academic advising model. Junior College Journal, 42\(6\), 62-69.*](#)

Roberts, R. (2007). *From the heart: Seven rules to live by*. New York: Hyerion.

Discussion questions related to the topic:

1. What questions do we currently ask students about their interests, skills, values, and passions in our advising sessions?
2. How do we help them connect that self knowledge information with the academic decisions they are making?
3. What are the most frequent career questions students ask us?
4. Which of these questions could we answer that would help students make wise academic decisions?
5. Who currently provides the answers to those career questions?
6. What are ways we could collaborate with those individuals to help us all better serve our students?

Cite using APA style as:

McCalla-Wriggins, B. (2009). Integrating Career and Academic Advising: Mastering the Challenge. Retrieved from *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* website: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Integrating-career-and-academic-advising.aspx>

Posted in: [Organizational Structures](#)

[Related Articles](#)

[Structuring Our Conversations: Shifting to Four Dimensional Advising Models](#)

Structuring Our Conversations: Shifting to Four Dimensional Advising Models Authored by: Marsha A. Miller 2012 Advisors teach stude...

[Organizational structure resource links](#)

Resources on Organizational Structuring Academic Advising Overviews of the issues surrounding organizational structures for acade...

[Organizational Structure Index](#)

NACADA resources: Faculty advising, by Cathy Kennemer and Bob Hurt, 2013 Residential Advising in the UK, via Academic Advising Today, 2013 S...

[Organizational Models for Advising](#)

Organizational Structures for Advising Celeste F. Pardee 2004 Organizational structure is the framework for delivering advising services to students...

[Implications for faculty advising 2011 National Survey](#)

Implications for Faculty Advising Stephen Wallace One of the intended outcomes of the 2011 NACADA National Survey included a better understanding of...

The contents of all material on this Internet site are copyrighted by the National Academic Advising Association, unless otherwise indicated. Copyright is not claimed as to any part of an original work prepared by a U.S. or state government officer or employee as part of that person's official duties. All rights are reserved by NACADA, and content may not be reproduced, downloaded, disseminated, published, or transferred in any form or by any means, except with the prior written permission of NACADA, or as indicated or as indicated in the '[Copyright Information for NACADA Materials](#)' statement. Copyright infringement is a violation of federal law and is subject to criminal and civil penalties. NACADA and National Academic Advising Association are service marks of the National Academic Advising Association.