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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to measure the level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising delivered by an integrated department of academic advising and career life planning. Rowan University, New Jersey, has counselors trained to provide academic and career life planning in one advising session. Several sources found in a literature review indicated that students do want career counseling as part of academic advising. The study was nonexperimental, but qualified as a descriptive study. Quantitative and qualitative measures were used to collect data. Qualitative interviews were held with four authors who have written about academic advising and five students who sought advising at Rowan University. For the quantitative study, 78 premajor and change-of-major students completed questionnaires about their advising experiences. Of these students, 63% were extremely satisfied, 29% were very satisfied, and 8% were satisfied. That the academic adviser was knowledgeable about majors and careers contributed to the satisfaction of more than half of these students. Twenty-six percent of the students expected both types of counseling to be available when they sought advising services. The interviews with authors and students also suggested that academic advising should incorporate career life planning. Three appendixes contain four tables of study findings and the questionnaires and interview questions. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

Student Satisfaction with Quality of Academic Advising Offered by
Integrated Department of Academic Advising and Career Life Planning

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Identification of the Research Problem

Conceptual Framework

The Division of Student Services in higher education comprises many departments that work collaboratively to help students achieve the optimum educational experience and to develop educational plans that are in keeping with their life goals. One such service is academic advising. The concept of academic advising as a component in higher education dates back to colonial America. Advising was initially the function of faculty who served as mentors and assisted in a student's ethical, intellectual and moral development. Academic advising has changed dramatically over time particularly since the 1970s. During that decade it was recognized that advising was more than the scheduling of classes. Also during the 1970s, advising was seen as a viable service to assist and to retain students in higher education (Gordon, Habley & Associates, 2000).

Much has been written about developmental academic advising and effective organizational structures for the best delivery of advising services. Authors summarize that the organizational model implemented at any campus needs a commitment from upper administration. Additionally each program needs set goals that keep with the goals of the institution and its mission. According to Virginia N. Gordon in the Handbook of Academic Advising, "Advising services can be centrally located and administered, decentralized, or coordinated. Each system is individualized to each campus's traditions and needs" (1992, p. 41).

Another area of student services in higher education is career counseling or career life planning. A great deal has been written about this type of advising as well, and several studies indicate that 20% to 50% of students entering college are undecided about their academic major and career and would benefit from career counseling (Gordon, 1995, 1992; Gordon & Habley,

2000). Also many students enter college with a major but make the choice to change majors during their college experience (Gordon & Habley). Much of the information that is written about career counseling points out its relevance to academic advising. When attempting to achieve advising and counseling objectives, one must know the subtasks involved. In Developmental Approaches to Academic Advising, Brown and Sanstead discuss the academic advising goal of assisting students in making applicable career choices and explain that the student must know his or her skills, abilities and interests. On many campuses this may require a visit to the testing center or counseling department. The student must also explore information about the careers related to the tested interests and abilities therefore requiring a visit to the career library. “Finally, the self-knowledge and the career awareness have to be integrated and related educational plans must be made” (Winston, Enders, & Miller, Eds., 1982, p. 59-60). This integration needs the assistance of a trained counselor and advisor so appropriate courses can be recommended for registration.

In the past decade student services in higher education have experienced the integration of the two types of advising previously described: academic advising and career life planning. An integrated department of academic and career counseling can provide students with appropriate self-assessment, exploration of careers and choice of the academic program and courses to successfully prepare for their intended career. This can be done by one department and therefore avoid a referral to separate departments on campus that the student may or may not contact. Wesley R. Habley lists as one of the goals for academic advising “assisting students in considering their life goals by relating their interests, skills, abilities, and values to careers, the world of work, and the nature and purpose of higher education” (Gordon & Habley, 2000, p. 40).

Career and Academic Planning (CAP) at Rowan University is an integrated department of academic advising and career life planning. This research project was designed to measure the level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising that is delivered to premajor and change of major students by this integrated department.

Statement of the Research Problem

The purpose of this research was to measure the level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising delivered by an integrated department of academic advising and career life planning. Career and Academic Planning at Rowan University has counselors trained to provide both academic and career counseling in one advising session. The department functions in an environment which includes many resources such as the Career Resource Library, the Discovery computer lab and a comprehensive website for major and career exploration and related skill development by the students. The level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising delivered by such a merged department has never been researched at Rowan. The purpose of this study was to extend the knowledge base about this topic and to generate further inquiry.

Statement of the Research Questions

It was intended that the research provide answers to the following questions.

1. Will premajor and change of major students be satisfied with the quality of academic advising offered by Career and Academic Planning at Rowan University given that it is an integrated department of career and academic advising?
2. Is it important to students that advisers ask appropriate questions to help a student realize the connection between academic choices, such as courses to take, and information about majors and future career choices, such as a job after graduation?

3. Will students feel satisfied with the information provided by advisers to help them see the connection between choices regarding their academic major or prospective major and future work and career decisions?
4. Are the premajor and change of major students at Rowan University who are advised by Career and Academic Planning aware that the resources to explore majors and careers are readily available in the Career and Academic Planning Resource Center and Discovery computer lab?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to increase the understanding of their meaning and provide uniformity throughout the study.

- ◆ **Academic advising** is according to Grites “assisting students to realize the maximum educational benefits available to them by helping them to better understand themselves and to learn to use the resources of an educational institution to meet their special educational needs and aspirations” (1979, p. 1).
- ◆ **Developmental academic advising** is defined as a particular advising relationship with students that supports and instills a quest for an enriched experience related to their education. It consists of ongoing student-adviser interactions and utilization of the entire range of resources available to the student to reach educational and personal goals. It includes course registration, academic competence, personal involvement, and the development of life purpose. Implementers of developmental academic advising acknowledge that the adviser is the representative most responsible for assisting students in gaining maximum benefits from their higher education experience (Gordon & Habley, 2000).

- ◆ **Career Counseling** is defined as a service provided to an individual client or group of clients who seek assistance with career choice or problems related to career adjustment (Isaacson & Brown, 2000).
- ◆ **Centrally located advising services** means that services are provided by an administrative unit or advising center that consists of a director and staff housed in one location (Gordon & Habley, 2000).
- ◆ **Decentralized advising services** are advising services provided by faculty and staff housed in the academic departments (Gordon & Habley, 2000).
- ◆ **Premajor students** are students who for one reason or another have not yet declared a major at Rowan University.
- ◆ **Undecided students** refers to students unwilling, unable or not ready to make educational and/or vocational decisions (Gordon, 1995).
- ◆ **Change of major students** are students who enter college with a major or declare a major once they are admitted and then change their minds during their college years.
- ◆ **Decision-making style** is the manner in which a person makes decisions.

Limitations of the Study

I recognize that the following conditions may have limited or affected the results of this study.

- ◆ The quantitative measure used for the research was a noncognitive questionnaire using a likert-type scale and may be susceptible to response set or faking. This limitation is addressed in the data collection procedures.
- ◆ Interviews were used as qualitative measures in the research and are subject to limitations due to the small sample size, possible influence by interviewer, and procedures for recording

responses based on typical research limitations with interviews. This is also addressed in the data collection procedures.

Review of Relevant Literature

The review of literature for this study began with conversations with two authors who have published books about academic advising. They are Virginia N. Gordon and Wesley R. Habley. Both authors and Betsy McCalla-Wriggins, author of the chapter entitled “Integrating Academic Advising and Career and Life Planning” in Academic Advising, A Comprehensive Handbook (Gordon & Habley, 2000) shared with me that there is very little published information about the integration of academic advising and career life planning. These secondary sources referred me to previously written books that address the need for career counseling and planning as a component of academic advising but continued to advise that the research does not address the level of student satisfaction with academic advising that incorporates career life planning. Additionally there is not any research to date that has studied the benefit, or lack of benefit to students, of integrating the two forms of counseling into one department.

I reviewed the available literature and will describe the results in the following paragraphs, starting first with the literature that specifically addresses the integration of academic advising and career life planning or the need to include career counseling in academic advising in some way. I will then describe the literature specifically related to academically advising undeclared and change of major students.

Literature Regarding the Integration of Academic Advising and Career Life Planning

The concept of academic advising dates back to early America when faculty members advised students about courses of study. In exploring the existing literature, I found a great deal

written about the components of each form of advising, changes in academic advising over time and models of advising for the future. However, there is very little existing literature or published research that addresses the level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising when the academic advising services include career counseling skills.

Only one source specifically discussed the advantages of the integrated approach to advising. Betsy McCalla-Wriggins writes in Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook that “one of the major reasons to consider the integration of academic advising and career life planning is that this approach demonstrates the four educational quality principles” (Gordon & Habley, 2000, p. 174). The Education Commission of the States listed these four quality principles in 1995. They include student-centeredness, efficiency and integrity of operation, commitment to good practices and quality management practices. McCalla-Wriggins continues to explain that the two types of advising can be organized in many ways in higher education organizational structures. A model for academic and career advising that totally integrates the two types is the most challenging to implement. Departments and counselors/advisers who have the skills to integrate the two advising processes can assist students holistically and include the total process.

Many authors indicate the need for the inclusion of career counseling in academic advising. Vivian Carroll McCollum makes a strong case for the need to include career counseling in the academic advising sessions in her article entitled “Career Advising: A Developmental Approach”. In describing a career advising model to use in academic advising McCollum states,

The overall challenge to the advisor is to meet the advisee’s developmental needs whether they are emotional, academic, or career oriented. To do so, the advisor must

recognize career helping as a legitimate advising responsibility and be aware that some student groups may face unique problems in career development. (1998, p. 15)

It is the adviser's responsibility to be familiar with advising and career resources, the paths to decision-making for the specific institution and academic programs and work programs as well. McCollum summarizes "to maximize the benefits of academic advising, a career counseling component must be included" (p. 18).

Additional literature to support the need for the integration of career and academic advising and skills is the article written by Jerry R. Wilder entitled: "Academic and Career Advising: Institutional Commitment and Program Recommendations". Wilder writes about the fourteen steps to improve a college or university's academic advising program. Included in step #2 is the need for an academic advising policy that "should reflect the university's concern for academic and career-related needs of its students" (1992, p. 108). Wilder writes that sound academic and career advising is a necessary adjunct to a good program. He continues that they help students realize their potential as effective members of the larger community. Step #8 of Wilder's recommendations includes the need for academic advisers to work together with professional staff in career planning and placement, records, registration and counseling. This working relationship will develop more effective academic advising. However, Wilder does not address the integration of the two advising processes or student satisfaction.

A National Survey of Academic Advising reported results indicating the need for career planning concepts and training in the advising process. It concluded that the employees responsible for academic advising saw it as addressing the informational needs of students rather than a part of the students' total development. Advising did not consider life planning which they believe is necessary for assisting students efficiently. This was reflected in the manner in

which services were delivered, materials used and training provided to those who delivered services. These results were based on the responses from 820 2-year, 4-year public, and 4-year private colleges and universities chosen by a random sampling which insured the item response would reflect national trends with a sampling error rate of less than 5%. The return rate of the survey was 75% (Carstensen & Siberhorn, 1979).

Additional support for the need to include career counseling in academic advising is provided in Virginia Gordon's Handbook of Academic Advising. The author discusses the importance of career advising in academic advising because of the concerns that students have about their work life after college. How involved an academic adviser becomes with career counseling in a non-integrated department depends on the adviser's background and expertise, the majors that they advise and the individual needs of the students. The academic adviser does need to develop skills beyond the information giving level. Helping students with self-assessment and the decision-making process are important adviser responsibilities and advisers must be knowledgeable about the career planning process. "Although most advisers are not expected to be experts in career counseling and occupational information, they do have an obligation to help students clarify their values and set goals that may relate to career and life planning" (Gordon, 1992, p. 84).

David S. Crockett in his chapter entitled "Academic Advising Delivery Systems" in Developmental Approaches to Academic Advising discusses the need to redefine academic advising. Advising needs restructuring so that the process includes exploring and integrating a student's academic, life and career goals because many authors believe these issues to be central to the advising process. Crockett recommends a model for advising that has a centralized academic advisement department "where all students could receive ongoing advising relative to

their educational and career planning needs at any time convenient to them” (Winston, Enders, & Miller, Eds., 1982, p. 49).

Several sources indicate that students desire career counseling to be a part of academic advising, and I feel it is relevant to include the research that approached the need from the students’ perspective. In the Student Satisfaction with Academic Advising Research Report at Boise State University, Marcia J. Belcheir reports that “topics during an advising session focused on scheduling and registration procedures although students wanted to talk more about career planning and academic difficulties” (1998, p. 4). Belcheir’s report is based on a survey from ACT that was administered to a random sample of undergraduate classes. The results reported that, in surveying the subjects about what they wished they had discussed in academic advising sessions, 47% noted finding a job after college, 43% noted identifying careers to fit their skills abilities, and 40% noted clarifying life and career goals. Reports such as this make a strong case for the need to incorporate career counseling into academic advising sessions by trained counselors who can integrate the career information.

In the Journal of Career Planning and Employment the article, “Undecided Students: How One College Developed a Collaborative Approach to Help Students Choose Majors and Careers”, explains how one campus created a collaborative Academic Discovery Lab (ADL). The lab was created in the hopes of providing the guidance that students sought regarding advising and career life planning at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The students at the University complained to faculty that they were receiving poor academic advising and little guidance in the selection of majors and career goal planning. In the article the authors describe how Career Services and Counseling and Testing Services supported the creation, funding and staffing of the ADL. The lab allowed students to explore the career decision-making process,

talk with a counselor, be referred to campus resources and discuss career options related to their interests and abilities. A user evaluation survey was conducted after one year of operation and subsequent research has shown that the lab users are more likely to remain in school (84% compared to 75%) and to have declared a major (38%) more so than non-users (26%) (Korschgen & Hageseth, 1997). Once again the article reflects students' desires to receive academic advising and career counseling components together to assist in their decision making in higher education.

Literature Specifically Regarding Premajors and Change of Major Students

This research project is designed to gather data from premajor and change of major students at Rowan University because that is the population served by the Career and Academic Planning Center, where the subjects will be surveyed and interviewed. In the existing literature some sources have made very strong cases to support the need to incorporate career counseling into the advising sessions for premajor and change of major students.

In A Developmental Advising Approach to Undecided Students (1995), Virginia Gordon discusses that students who have not declared a major in college often feel pressured to do so but consider major exploration to have a very low priority on their activities list. A developmental advising program needs to recognize students' involvement with other tasks and help students to integrate these tasks into major and career exploration. The advising environment needs to provide support for the undecided students and their personal, academic and vocational development. Students not only need help in gathering information for course scheduling but also self-assessment and academic and career information needs to be integrated in the advising model for undecided students to assist them in the decision-making process.

At Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, the Division of Undeclared Majors prepared a Guidebook for Advising Undeclared Majors in 1991. It was designed as a handbook for both academic advisers and advisees. It lists the need to describe and integrate information about self-concept, interests, skills, experiences and values in the advising session and how these contribute to making sound academic and occupational decisions (Jones, Schultz, & Monismith, 1991).

The literature written to suggest that incorporating career counseling in the academic advising session is a help to the change of major student includes Virginia Gordon's The Undecided College Student (1995). Gordon discusses that not all academic advisers have the skills necessary to assist the change of major student. Major-changers may need career advice since it may be necessary to explore students' strengths, interests and values. These change of major students are often rethinking their goals, exploring occupational implications of alternative majors and devising new career plans. Academic advisers therefore need a clear procedure to follow when advising change of major students so they can help their advisees think through the changing process and also make referrals to other resources on campus if necessary.

In the Handbook of Academic Advising published three years prior to the previously described text, Virginia Gordon states similar information. Gordon explains that although not all advisers can be experts in career counseling it is even more important to the undecided student and students who are in the process of changing from one major to another, that the adviser have general academic and career information. "Advisers need to be knowledgeable about the career development process in general and the resources on campus to which students may be referred when testing and counseling in self-assessment, occupational information, decision-making

techniques, and placement services are needed” (1992, p. 83-4). Advisers play a key role in the career planning process as it relates to choice of major and future career plans.

Methodology

Design

This study provided a traditional research design. It was non-experimental research because it did not involve the manipulation of any variables or changing of any condition to affect the subjects’ responses. It qualified as a descriptive study, intended to report the level of satisfaction of students advised at the CAP Center at Rowan University.

The study used quantitative and qualitative measures to collect data and the results are recorded in this report based on that collection. The results are quantitatively reported with percentages, mean and mode information and qualitatively reported with an explanation and summary of the results of the nine interviews. The interviews include four with authors who have written and published books about academic advising and five with students who sought academic advising between April 3 and April 12, 2001.

Sampling

The sample used in the study was a non-random sample of convenience consisting of 78 premajor and change of major students who sought academic advising between April 3 and April 12, 2001 in the Career and Academic Planning Center (CAP) at Rowan University. During that time span each of the 78 students filled in a questionnaire after attending a scheduled appointment with one of six different professional counselors or were seen as a walk-in (seen on a first-come, first-serve basis) between the dates listed previously.

Subjects

The subjects who completed the questionnaires for this study are Rowan University students. The questionnaires were completed by 31 males and 47 females (see Table A1). They could be freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors because all of these categories are serviced by the CAP Center. Thirty-one freshmen, 25 sophomores, 19 juniors and 2 seniors completed the questionnaires. One female student did not identify her class status (see Table A2). The subjects consisted of 49 premajor students and 28 students who have a declared major. One student did not identify if he/she is a premajor or declared major (see Table A3).

Regarding the four authors used for the qualitatively designed interviews, they were asked because each has published materials about academic advising and are considered by many to be experts in the field of academic advising. Their background, years of experience and published works were used for selecting them as interviewees. I interviewed Thomas Grites, Assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Virginia Gordon, Assistant Dean Emeritus at Ohio State University, Wesley Habley, Director of the Office of Advancement for Educational Process at ACT Center in Iowa, and Betsy McCalla-Wriggins, Director of Career and Academic Planning at Rowan University.

The five students who were interviewed were randomly chosen from the subjects who sought advising on any given day during the research dates. These students were chosen from those who completed the last question on the survey that asked if they were willing to be interviewed about academic advising. Every third student was called until I was able to reach and talk with 5 students. During the phone call the same questions were asked as part of the interview.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of the study included a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions as a quantitative measure (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was noncognitive in design and was intended to assess students' levels of satisfaction. The questionnaire used a likert-type scale to measure how students feel about the quality of academic advising at the CAP Center. Questions included what traits are important to the student in an academic adviser, what was discussed in the advising session and how satisfied the student was with the advising session. The questionnaire was pilot tested from March 27 to 30, 2001 with students who sought academic advising in the CAP Center. Adjustments were then made for improvement.

Interviews with four authors and five randomly selected students were the qualitative measures used. The interviews consisted of semistructured questions that were objective and allowed for follow-up and clarification by the interviewees. The authors were asked 12 questions and the students were asked 9 questions.

The four authors who have written on the topic that were interviewed are Virginia Gordon, Wesley Habley, Tom Grites, and Betsy McCalla-Wriggins. All of these interviews were pre-arranged telephone interviews except the interview with Betsy McCalla-Wriggins, which was in person because it was most convenient to do so. All interviewees were provided the 12 questions prior to the interview (see Appendix C).

Five students were interviewed for feedback, and they were randomly chosen from the students who filled in the survey that they were willing to be interviewed as previously explained. There were nine semi-structured interview questions that were asked during telephone interviews on April 16, 2001 (see Appendix D).

Data Collection Procedures

From April 3 to April 12, 2001, a total of eight working days in the CAP Center, a questionnaire was completed by each student who sought academic advising. The surveys were given to the six individual counselors employed by the CAP Center to give to the students they advised and they were collected at the end of each day. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire after the advising session and deposit in a prepared collection bin in the reception area of the CAP Center office. After April 12 the data was compiled and analyzed.

Every attempt was made to clearly describe the instrumentation for this study, the procedures for administering the questionnaire, the interview process, and the pilot testing of the questionnaire to contribute to the validity and reliability of the reported results. Every attempt was made to minimize the effects of interviewer bias through reflexivity since the researcher was the interviewer. Also to avoid the problems of response set and faking the research project was briefly described to the subjects and the need for their honesty in answering questions was explained. Additionally the subjects were encouraged to complete the questionnaire in the reception area to minimize any chance of the questions being answered in a manner to please the adviser.

The four telephone interviews with authors who have written on the subject of advising or integrating academic and career advising were conducted between the dates of April 9 and April 24. Notes were taken during the phone conversations. Additionally five interviews with students seeking advising were completed by telephone on April 16. Data was collected through notetaking for the student interviews also.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the scheduled interviews with four authors and five students the answers to the interview questions were coded, organized, summarized and reported. I examined

all data from the notes taken during the interviews and noted patterned regularities. I organized the data around these relationships and summarized it for the report being careful not to report generalizations about the population since this study does not use a random sample but rather a sample of convenience. The student interview group could be considered a random subsample of the convenience sample however because it is still based on the convenience sample the results can not be generalized to the population.

The data from the questionnaires was tallied, computed and reported both statistically and with percentages where possible. SPSS9 Software was used to report descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages accurately as part of this report. The calculated statistics were converted to tables and charts and are included in the report where helpful to clarify the findings (see text and Appendix A). The data was categorized and summarized to provide the answers to the four proposed research questions.

Discussion

Quantitative Results

This research was designed to assess the level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising offered by the Career and Academic Planning Center at Rowan University which is an integrated department of career and academic advising. The review of literature reflects that career life planning needs to be incorporated in academic advising sessions (Belcheir, 1998; Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Habley, 2000; McCollum, 1998; Wilder, 1992) to efficiently meet the needs of students in higher education. Training in career life planning and knowledge of resources to explore career opportunities allows the academic adviser to help a college student choose courses, see the application of their choices to their major program and also to relate the value of their major to future career choice.

The questionnaire used for the research was designed to assess student satisfaction with advising and to ask the subjects if they were assisted in seeing the relationship between the choices that they make academically and future goals and career planning. It was completed by 78 Rowan University students who were 40% male and 60% female (see Table A1), 64% premajors and 36% declared majors (see Table A3), and 40% freshmen (31 students), 32% sophomores (25 students), 25% juniors (19 students), and 3% seniors (2 students). One subject did not identify his/her student status (see Table A2).

One of the first items on the questionnaire asked the subjects to identify the reason for coming to the CAP Center. In responding to this question 72% chose academic advising, 26% chose both academic advising and career counseling and 2% chose career counseling (see Table A4). Of the 78 students who completed the questionnaire 95% came to the CAP Center to discuss selection of courses. The same group identified as their primary goals both course selection and choosing/changing a major.

This study was successful in answering all of the original research questions. In response to the question about the level of satisfaction with the quality of academic advising offered by Career and Academic Planning at Rowan University, 63% of the subjects were extremely satisfied, 29% were very satisfied and 8% were satisfied. The reported median for this question was 5.00 or extremely satisfied with 49 of the 78 subjects marking that as their choice. The mean was 4.55 between very satisfied and extremely satisfied and the mode was 5 or extremely satisfied (see Table 5).

Table 5
Satisfaction of subjects with quality of advising

	N	Valid	78
Mean			4.55
Std. Deviation			.64

In understanding the previous responses to the survey question about student satisfaction with academic advising it is important to know what adviser/advising traits the subjects considered important regarding their satisfaction (see Table 6). In response to the questionnaire item that required subjects to check all of the traits that they considered important in an adviser, 100% marked that the adviser is easy to talk with. The second most frequently marked trait was that the adviser spends sufficient amount of time with the student with 92% of the subjects checking that response. The adviser is knowledgeable about majors and careers and the adviser greets me politely were both checked by 88% of the subjects. As seen in Table 6, 83% of the subjects wanted to discuss their major or intended major and 77% wanted the adviser to discuss academic and career goals to be satisfied. For the subjects who answered the questionnaire, and only those subjects, it can be summarized that it contributed to the satisfaction of more than 50% of the subjects that their academic adviser was knowledgeable about majors and careers in addition to knowing about academic issues.

Table 6

Summary of responses about traits of advisers contributing to student satisfaction

Trait	Number of subjects of N who checked trait; N = 78	% of subjects who marked the response
Adviser is easy to talk with	78	100
Adviser spends sufficient amount of time with me	72	92
Adviser is knowledgeable about majors & careers	69	88
Adviser greets me politely	69	88
Adviser asks me about my major or intended major	65	83
Adviser discusses my academic & career goals	60	77
Adviser asks me about my career or intended career	39	50

The questionnaire asked all subjects to respond to a question about the importance to the student of the adviser discussing information to help him/her realize the connection between academic choices and future career choices. The result shows that 51% feel it is extremely important, 40% feel it is very important, 8% responded important and 1% feel it is somewhat important (see Figure 1). The mode for this question was 5 or extremely important with 40 of the 78 subjects responding with that choice. The mean was 4.38 between very important and extremely important and the median is 5.00.

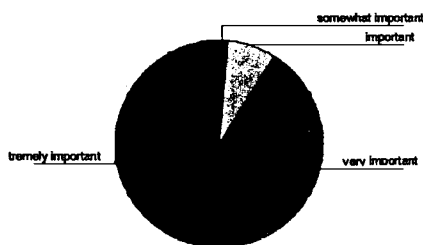


Figure 1. Importance of adviser discussing information with the student to help him/her realize the connection between academic choices and future career choices.

When asked if the students feel satisfied with the information provided by advisers to help them see the connection between choices regarding their academic major or prospective major and future career decisions 51% responded extremely satisfied, 40% very satisfied and 9% were satisfied. The mode is 5 or extremely satisfied with 39 subjects choosing that response. The mean is 4.36 between very satisfied and extremely satisfied and the median is 4.50 (see Table 7).

Table 7

Satisfaction with the information that was provided by advisers to relate choices to majors

	N	Valid	
			78
Mean			4.36
Std. Deviation			.82

In response to the question about whether or not the adviser helped them to see the connection between their selected courses and their major or hopeful major and career goals 97% of the subjects answered yes and 3% responded no.

The questionnaire asked if the premajor and change of major students at Rowan University, who are advised by Career and Academic Planning, are aware that the resources to explore majors and careers are readily available in the Career and Academic Planning Resource Center and Discovery computer lab. All 78 subjects responded and the results show that 87% answered yes; 13% answered no.

Interview Results

This study included four interviews with veterans of academic advising who have published articles and books on the topic of academic advising. They have been involved in academic advising for anywhere from 13 to 30 years. All of them have been involved in career

counseling for 25 to 30 years. The information that was provided in the interviews was reviewed and summarized and it shows a great deal of consistency in the responses.

When asked the traits that are important in an academic adviser the interviewees consistently said knowledge of academic advising. They also included as important the adviser's accessibility, listening skills, concern for the students and desire to increase his/her knowledge of advising. The traits that they named for the career counselor were the same except each interviewee elaborated that the knowledge base is different and includes more current information. It also includes specific skills for administering self-assessment tools.

When asked if a connection exists between academic advising and career life planning the interviewees answered yes and Wesley Habley explained, "They are part and parcel of the same continuing process." Virginia Gordon said, "They are interchangeable." This is what the literature reflects in my review of literature. Furthermore when the interviewees were asked if any literature exists that addresses the advantages and disadvantages to students of integrating the two services they answered no. Thomas J. Grites said, "No, there is limited, almost non-existent outcomes research." This response of no by all authors directly correlates with the findings in the literature review.

All authors felt that there is value in career life planning being discussed as part of developmental academic advising sessions. They felt that although the processes should already be combined, that many campuses will maintain separate departments because of obstacles like turf battles and issues around placement of the departments in either academic affairs or student affairs. Other disadvantages are the increased numbers of students to be served and resources. Two of the interviewees voiced concern for funding because creating one department may be viewed as a means to save money and funds may be decreased instead of increased. Training

faculty advisers is another barrier to incorporating career planning in academic advising because they commented that many faculty do not see it as their role to provide career counseling as part of the advising process.

The authors ended the interviews by resoundingly stating that more research is needed regarding the relationship of career life planning and academic advising and its benefits to students. The recommended research included student satisfaction studies and also outcome assessments, studies of change of major rates during college with different structures of advising services and alumni studies of the number of major changes and frequency of occupational adjustments after college. This is consistent with the information that was presented in the review of relevant literature.

Interviews with five students were conducted as additional qualitative measures used in this study. The traits that these students thought were important in academic advisers were the ability to relate to students, friendliness, helpfulness, being knowledgeable and honesty. When the students were asked why they sought academic advising the answers included finding courses to take, needing help with finding a major, seeking help with career choices and continuing in the right direction. This list of topics to discuss in the advising session includes issues related to career life planning and reiterates the importance of advisers having the knowledge of career information to assist students efficiently. Although these students were not aware that the CAP Center is an integrated department of academic and career planning they all felt that the two topics are related and they are very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the advising they receive. One interviewee expressed that she was not satisfied previously when someone advised her in a major program. Of the students who were interviewed, two of the five said that they would probably not go to another department for career counseling if their

academic adviser referred them because she did not have career information. The interviewees shared that three of them had used the CAP Center computer lab and library for information.

Conclusions

This present study was successful in assessing the level of student satisfaction with the quality of academic advising offered by Career and Academic Planning at Rowan University between April 3 and 12, 2001. The students who completed the questionnaire were 63% extremely satisfied, 29% very satisfied and 8% satisfied. None of the students responded that they were dissatisfied or only somewhat satisfied with the academic advising offered by a merged department of academic advising and career planning. In addition 99% of the subjects felt that is important to extremely important that an academic adviser assumes the responsibility to help them relate their academic choices to their major and future career goals. The results of the questionnaire reflect that 97% of the subjects felt that the CAP adviser helped them to see the relationship between their selected courses and their major and career goals. This is by definition not a traditional task of the academic cadviser but one that the literature suggests (Belcheir, 1998; Gordon, 1992; Gordon & Habley, 2000; McCollum, 1998; Wilder, 1992) needs to be included in developmental academic advising. Furthermore for the convenience sample that was used in the study it is true that the subjects want academic advisers who are knowledgeable about majors and careers and can assist them with career exploration and future goals.

Additional data was compiled through interviews with five students who sought academic advising on the days of the study. The results of the interviews also confirmed that the students who were advised were satisfied with advising. Although they did not respond that they were previously aware of the integrated department of academic and career counseling at Rowan,

they all thought that it was good that the department offered both services in a merged format. Of the five students interviewed two of the interviewees said that they would probably not visit a second department for career issues if the academic adviser did not provide the career planning information. The review of literature and the interviews with four authors who have written about academic advising show that very little research exists about outcome assessment of integrating career life planning and academic advising. The literature recommends that academic advisers combine career planning in the advising session, but based on the previously described interviews that is not always what is accomplished, and may be more difficult in some organizational structures than others. Professional advisers have more opportunity for cross training and keeping abreast of career trends than do many faculty advisers on college campuses. The placement of advising in the campus organizational structure can also be very controversial as previously described.

The one reoccurring thread throughout the study which is attested to by both the quantitative and qualitative measures used in assessment is that students are satisfied with the advising process when both academic and career issues are discussed in the same session. Twenty-six percent of the students in the study expected both types of counseling to be available when they sought advising services.

Recommendations

Academic advising is recognized by many administrators in higher education to be one of the major contributing factors to a student's knowledge of how to seek the optimum benefits of higher education. The most efficient model for academic advising will vary from campus to campus. According to the relevant literature many authors state that developmental academic advising includes career life planning.

The students who participated in this study were satisfied with the quality of academic advising that they received and it included career life planning information. The literature shows that major and career exploration is an important issue in academic advising sessions. In this study the review of the literature and interviews with experts in academic advising suggest that there is very limited research about the effects of integrating academic advising and career life planning and the outcome to students in higher education. More research is needed if academic advisers are to be encouraged to increase their knowledge of career life planning and to incorporate the information in advising sessions. Additional research would be helpful in assessing the need to train all professional advisers and faculty advisers in academic advising processes and career planning information.

As more and more colleges and universities research the possibility and seek to integrate the two forms of advising into one department, reported evidence as to the benefits of the integrated structure would be extremely beneficial, if there are proven benefits. Such evidence has thus far not been extensively researched nor reported. The authors on the subject recommend research about the outcomes and clearly state that it does not exist. The study of the obstacles or techniques to supplement an easy merger of the two would be beneficial too.

This present study extended the knowledge base slightly on this topic and may benefit the services that are offered by Career and Academic Planning at Rowan University, which is an integrated department. The advisers at the CAP Center need to continue to incorporate career life planning in the advising process and to refer students to the helpful CAP resources that are available for continued student satisfaction. This study also serves to point out that much more research is needed and that it would be beneficial to higher education and those interested in academic advising and career life planning. I predicted in the proposal for this research project

that at its conclusion the academic advising world will be very interested in the results of future research and this is confirmed by the authors I interviewed and this research report.

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Appendix A

Table 1
Gender of students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
male	31	39.7	39.7	39.7
female	47	60.3	60.3	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

Table 2
Class status of students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
freshman	31	39.7	39.7	41.0
sophomore	25	32.1	32.1	73.1
Junior	19	24.4	24.4	97.4
senior	2	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

Table 3
Major status of students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
Premajor	49	62.8	62.8	64.1
Declared	28		35.9	100.0
Major				
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

Table 4
Reasons for coming to the CAP Center

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Academic advising	56	71.8	71.8	71.8
Academic advising	56	71.8	71.8	71.8
Career counseling	2	2.6	2.6	74.4
Career counseling	2	2.6	2.6	74.4
Both academic advising and career counseling	20	25.6	25.6	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

Appendix B

Number: _____ CAP Center Research Questionnaire (Reduced for Appendix A to fit on one page) Date: _____

This questionnaire is part of a research project for the CAP Center and a course in Procedures and Evaluation in Research. Thank you for taking a minute to answer the questions honestly.

Please check one in numbers 1-4:

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Alumni

3. Major Status: Premajor Declared Major

4. Reason for coming to the CAP Center:

Academic advising Career counseling Both academic advising and career counseling

5. My primary goal today was: (Check all that apply.)

Course selection Choosing/changing a major Choosing/changing a career

6. I discussed the following during my counseling session: (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Course information and choice	<input type="checkbox"/> Interview techniques
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Identifying employers & contacts
<input type="checkbox"/> Major information	<input type="checkbox"/> Reality testing (internships, field experiences, part-time & summer jobs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Career information	<input type="checkbox"/> Exploring available positions
<input type="checkbox"/> Resume/cover letter information	<input type="checkbox"/> Using the CAP resource library & computer lab

7. The following traits are important to me in an adviser and contribute to my satisfaction with the quality of advising: (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser greets me politely	<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser is knowledgeable about majors & careers
<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser is easy to talk with	<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser discusses my academic & career goals
<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser asks me about my major or intended major	<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser spends sufficient amount of time with me
<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser asks me about my career or intended career	

8. How important is it to you that the adviser discusses information to help you relate your choice of courses to your major and future career plans?

Extremely important Very important Important Somewhat important Not important

9. Did the adviser help you to see the connection between your selected courses, your major and your career plans?

yes no

10. How satisfied are you with the information that was provided by the adviser to help you see the connection between your choice of courses, your major and future career decisions?

Extremely satisfied Very satisfied Satisfied Somewhat satisfied Dissatisfied

11. How satisfied are you with the quality of advising/counseling that you received today?

Extremely satisfied Very satisfied Satisfied Somewhat satisfied Dissatisfied

12. I am aware that the CAP Center has a Resource Library and Discovery Computer Lab to help me with self-assessment and the exploration of majors and careers.

yes no

13. Did the adviser mention the library and lab? yes no

14. I have used the CAP Resource Library and/or Discovery Computer Lab.

Library Computer Lab Both No, I have not used them.

15. I wish my adviser had also discussed or spoken longer about:

16. I would be willing to be interviewed about my academic advising session for a research project. I can be reached at the following phone number or email address. (Provide first name only)

_____ Phone _____ email _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Those who have Written about Academic Advising

Name _____ Title _____ Date _____

1. How many years have you been involved in academic advising?
2. How many years have you been involved in career counseling?
3. What do you feel are the traits that are important in an academic adviser for successfully meeting the needs of the students?
4. What do you believe to be the traits of a successful career counselor?
5. Is there a correlation between academic advising and career life planning? If so, what is the relationship?
6. The literature speaks to the need to incorporate career planning in developmental academic advising. To your knowledge does research exist to reflect the advantages of integrating the two services?
7. Do you feel there are advantages and if so what are they?
8. Are there any disadvantages to integrating the two services and merging departments that are currently separate departments?
9. What is the importance of a counselor helping a student to see the connection between academic choices and future career plans?
10. How can advisers help students to see the connection between their choice of coursework and major and future career plans?
11. What do you see for the future of academic advising and career life planning?
12. Do you believe that research is needed in this area?

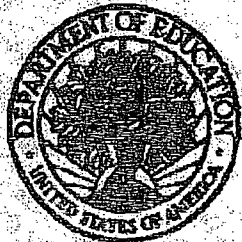
Appendix D

Interview Questions for Students about Academic Advising

Name _____

Date _____

1. Why do you seek academic advising?
2. How often do you contact your academic adviser?
3. What traits are important to you in a good academic adviser?
4. Is academic advising (choosing courses and majors) related to your future career plans?
How?
5. How satisfied are you with the academic advising that you receive?
6. If your academic adviser referred you to another department to discuss jobs related to your major because he/she was not a career counselor, would you follow-up and see another counselor? Why or Why not?
7. Are you glad that your counselor can assist you with both?
8. Have you used the resource center? The lab? What have you explored?
9. Is there anything else that you wish that you could discuss with your academic adviser?



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