

# Virginia Gordon: Pioneering the Concept of Scholar-Practitioner in Academic Advising Through Her Own Scholarship and Practice

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*Virginia Gordon has had a significant influence on academic advising. Her scholarly work, along with that of other scholars in the field, shows how much she was respected and valued. In this article, we review her scholarly work to highlight some of her great research. Additionally, we incorporate personal narratives from those who knew her best, her closest colleagues.*

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In 1978, I had met Virginia and engaged in several conversations with her, all of which contained some discussion of undecided students, and I easily became an advocate for that student population that she studied so voraciously. I know those sentiments stimulated me to look further into her work and to make an effort to meet her to share our thoughts about each of the themes described in this article. (T. Grites, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to talk to Dr. Gordon about her scholarship, but it has informed so much of my practice in academic advising. Regardless of whether I am working with undeclared students, other academic advisors, or colleagues in career services, I have found her written work influential. It is the literature I use to frame practice. Also, I see inspiration from her work in current advising literature, such as the NACADA Academic Advising Core Competencies Model. (S. Aiken-Wisniewski, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Virginia Gordon was a classically trained scholar who framed her research through the questions that emerged in her practice. In this article, we examine Gordon's scholar-practitioner

journey from graduate student to published scholar and research-driven practitioner. We combine personal narratives from those who knew her directly with the extensive research and scholarship that she produced over the years that also informed her own academic advising and administrative practice. The journey is that of a scholar-practitioner. The journey begins with a definition of *scholar-practitioner* and descriptions of the methodologies Gordon employed in her early research. Next, we examine her scholarship, including her dissertation as well as newer articles and books along with personal narratives from colleagues, to describe this iconic scholar-practitioner in academic advising. The final section of this article draws attention to three particular themes in Gordon's research agenda: (a) holistic advising, (b) continuous learning, and (c) relationship development. Gordon's work addressed important elements of the academic advising process and practice, including the advisee, advisor, and advising program, and professional development and engagement in organizations such as NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. We begin with an examination of the concept of scholar-practitioner through the work and practice of Gordon.

## Pioneering the Concept of Scholar-Practitioner

Few would argue with the notion that Virginia Gordon made significant contributions to the field of academic and career advising. She devoted her life to engaging students, implementing new programs, improving existing programs, and contributing to research and practice. Gordon's (1977) first piece, *Differentiated Levels of Undecidedness and Choice Satisfaction among Educationally and Vocationally Uncommitted University Freshmen*—her dissertation—focused on undecided students and choice satisfaction within their academic advising appointments. Her dissertation exemplifies the rigorous academic training Gordon received in her graduate program. For example, the theoretical framework of her dissertation is sociologically based and informed by literature that

explains vocational, trait-factor, personality, and self-concept theories. The result was a study that explored the choice of major for undecided first-year students. Her work in this area was instrumental in shaping an approach to working with undecided students that considered indecision along a continuum. As she noted in her dissertation, "One conclusion reached from the results of this study is that it can no longer be feasible to report research on 'undecided' students without first acknowledging the vast differences in levels of indecision among them" (Gordon, 1977, p. 152). Gordon's practice as an academic advisor who worked with exploratory students offered a deeper understanding of the subject and population, thus complementing her academic training, adding to the literature on the choice of major and fulfilling the requirements of her doctoral program. Gordon's experience establishes an early precedent for practicing administrators to engage in advanced study and action research. She became a very real example of a scholar-practitioner.

Kidder (2010) defined a scholar-practitioner as an individual who "engages in research and scholarly endeavors while continuing in the role of an administrator" (p. 1). What scholar-practitioners seek is "how can scholarship be applied to the practicalities of student experiences?" (Hatfield & Wise, 2015, p. 4). Gordon is a pioneering scholar-practitioner in the field of academic advising. One professional colleague recently indicated that "It is her extraordinary work focused on exploratory students that first brought to light there were theories, approaches, and concepts about academic advising that were not prescriptive" (C. Nutt, personal communication, December 1, 2018).

Following her dissertation and continuing as a scholar-practitioner, her 1978 work on *A Comprehensive Program of Academic Advising and Career Development for University Freshmen* outlined an academic advising model for incoming first-year students that had not yet declared a major; they could select "undecided." This moved away from the traditional requirement of forcing students to declare a major upon admission to a university. Conceptually, the model involved having all incoming students attend an orientation before their first term and participate in an extended orientation during the first term by enrolling in a one-credit hour orientation course. This model became the structure that most of us are familiar with today as University College.

Gordon expanded the foundation of University College to address the needs of institutions implementing the university college concept for student populations in addition to those who were undecided (a university college could have more functions than advising). With the introduction of a temporary "major" for students, the complexity of academic advising increased as advisors helped students navigate both major and career selection. If readers would like to learn more about specific details concerning University College at The Ohio State University, please refer to the article by George Steele in this issue.

To be honest, I have never been a fan of separating career advising and academic advising, simply because the former seems to me to be an important part of the latter. Nevertheless, I have always respected Virginia's passion for this aspect of student development. Her explanations of how students actualize this development provide wonderful examples and guidelines for an academic advisor's thinking about the process of career development and how to incorporate this process into the academic advising context. (T. Grites, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

Gordon's doctoral education and research agenda were influenced by her academic advising practice. Her practice generated questions for her that were answered through theories or published literature or identified the need for further research. The alignment between her research and practice, in turn, informed her methodological training and choices.

### **Gordon's Research Methodology**

Through Gordon's graduate education in the 1970s, she was introduced to quantitative methodologies. Her dissertation used a quasi-experimental design to "determine if entering college freshmen who volunteered for and attended a workshop package are any different in personal and background characteristics from students who did not attend" (Gordon, 1977, p. 48). Based on Gordon's scholarship, we conclude one purpose of her work was to encourage those in higher education to think differently about major selection and to offer a model for engaging students in a process to explore their options for an academic major (Gordon,

1977; Gordon & Sears, 2003; Gordon & Steele, 1992; Steele, Kennedy, & Gordon, 1993).

Creswell (2014) defined a quasi-experimental design as two groups being compared without the use of random assignment: the experimental group and control group are selected without random assignment with a pretest and posttest administered to the experimental group. Gordon applied this design to other emerging questions in academic advising and continued to use comparative research methods in her later work, such as *A Comprehensive Program of Academic Advising and Career Development for University Freshmen* (Gordon, Sheffler, & Weaver, 1978) and *Advising Major-Changers: Students in Transition* (Gordon & Steele, 1992). She also used this approach to assess academic advising programs within her own university.

Students in transition from one major to another are often ignored. Although some major-changers make the transition in an orderly way, many others who cannot access oversubscribed majors, who do not perform adequately in their chosen area, who are rejected from selective programs, or who have advanced hours and are still uncertain about a direction need special advising approaches (Gordon & Steele, 1992, p. 27).

Gordon's work on major-changers reframed how advisors approached major selection with students. It was about not only matching students with their interests but also whether or not students would succeed in their selected major.

Her later work, *Students Needing Academic Alternative Advising: A National Survey* (Gordon & Polson, 1985), *Changes in Social and Academic Integration in Freshmen of High and Average Ability: Implications for Retention* (Kennedy, Gordon, & Gordon, 1995), and *Advising by E-Mail: Some Advisors' Perceptions* (Steele & Gordon, 2001), showcased Gordon's ability to incorporate survey design into her scholarship. Her article with Steele and Kennedy (1993) highlights her versatile knowledge of quantitative research by comparing students who entered the Academic Alternatives Program to a cohort group that matched in terms of gender, curriculum academic program, grade-point average, credit hours, and number of quarters enrolled. Additionally, a third randomly selected group was used to study the potential effects of the Academic Alternatives

Program compared to a representative sample of University College students.

Ultimately, Gordon applied various types of research methodologies to contribute to the scholarship of academic advising. As a scholar-practitioner, it is important to understand research methodologies to identify results that emerge from rigorous studies that have used methods that are appropriate to the research questions being explored. Thus, Gordon modeled good practice for the scholar-practitioner around research strategies that inform practice. Moving beyond practice to contributions, we find that Gordon's contributions reflected and aligned with the academic advising themes she identified; those being holistic advising, continuous learning, and relationship development.

### **Gordon's Contribution to Scholarship on Holistic Advising**

I was fortunate to be a co-author on *Developmental Academic Advising* (Winston, Miller, Ender, & Grites, 1984). For a decade, this major resource became the standard concept about what academic advising could/should be – the holistic concept of the student's academic, personal, and career goals and aspirations. [Virginia] and I were very much of the same mind about the developmental academic advising concept. Subsequently, we co-authored an article that re-iterated – and defended – the concept. (T. Grites, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

Gordon's scholarship focused on the development of the whole person. She and her co-authors, including Dr. Grites who is quoted above, developed a framework for a holistic approach to advising that is referred to as developmental advising. Gordon's 1994 article *Developmental Advising: The Elusive Ideal* brought the importance of advising the "whole student" (p. 71) into the forefront. In the fashion of a skilled scholar-practitioner, Gordon opened the article by crediting theorists from disciplines focused on human development for laying the foundation for developmental advising, specifically highlighting the work of Burns Crookston for bringing this approach to academic advising. Developmental advising required the advisor to approach the work from an academic planning perspective and

from an intellectual, personal, and social experience perspective. By the time of this article, developmental advising had become, as Gordon (1994) noted, “an ideal.” She wrote, “a developmental approach to advising—focusing on the individual student’s concerns, needs, and aspirations—is accepted as an ideal by many writers and practitioners in this field” (p. 71).

Although Gordon (1994) argued that developmental advising had become the ideal way of advising students, she questioned why it was not affecting students as much as it should. She proceeded to offer reasons that explained the slow incorporation of developmental advising into daily practice. These reasons were many and included advising loads, communication skills to build relationships, advisor professional development, monetary resources, decentralized services, knowledge of different student populations, and evaluation of advising. She intertwined these reasons with factors such as different institution types, levels of administrative support, and types of advisors (graduate students, professionals, or faculty members) to remind the reader that one size does not fit all as developmental advising is introduced and nurtured on campus. She concluded with a call to action that “until advisors and students persuade administrators that developmental advising is essential, inaction and lack of support will remain” (p. 74). Gordon’s own belief in the value of developmental advising led her to become an activist for students and their academic and career decision-making issues, especially undecided students.

As colleagues reflected on Gordon’s writing and scholarship, the focus on the undecided student population often emerged. One interviewee noted:

I was particularly drawn to Virginia’s work and thoughts about undecided college students since that was my primary responsibility. Virginia’s work and advocacy helped to give these students the recognition they deserved. She pioneered various approaches to working with these students and made them a legitimate group of college students for scholarly inquiry. (E. White, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

Arguably, her most comprehensive work is the book titled *The Undecided College Student: An Academic and Career Advising Challenge* (2015). Even though the original volume was written in 1984, Gordon continued to examine and engage

with this population to produce multiple editions—the fourth edition was published in 2015 with George E. Steele as co-author. The content in this volume identifies early theoretical contributions, defines an undecided student, explains types of undecided students, suggests relevant literature and frameworks, and identifies models of advising for undecided students. As Gordon suggested in earlier work, she explores the student holistically, beyond academics, to offer the best advising for undecided students. Gordon and Steele (2015) explained: “The developmental approach views undecided students not as persons searching for an academic or career niche, but as individuals continually engaged in a series of developmental tasks that ultimately enable them to adapt and change in a pluralistic world” (p. 68). The authors also touched on gender differences, cultural differences, and gender fluidity (e.g., LGBT identities) to remind advisors that identity, as well as other factors, matters when advising the student as a whole. The fourth edition of this volume emerged over a lifetime of research, practice, and writing that eloquently models the iterative process of research and practice. However, the range of her knowledge that influenced the field extended beyond approaches and student identity to include the value of learning and relationships in the process of academic advising.

### **Gordon’s Contribution to Scholarship that Focused on Learning**

Virginia’s vision, development, and operation of the University College advising and learning structures always made sense to me, and Virginia was the master of this effort. Her use of a “freshman seminar” course was just one more example of her attempts to teach students how to make decisions, how to engage with the university, and how to understand and utilize the curriculum; the classroom format always seemed to be the optimum mode of delivery to achieve current and future learning experiences throughout the college experience. (T. Grites, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

The emphasis on learning is a memory that emerges for Grites, especially around Gordon’s work on advising programs, such as University College, and courses that address the students’ transition to college. Dewey (1998, p. 49) said,



“The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning.” Through recent interviews with Gordon’s close NACADA colleagues, the importance of being a learner for Gordon was apparent: “Through her writings and her presentations, it is clear that Virginia was a teacher and a scholar. But she was also a learner who always engaged in dialogue over new ideas and approaches to advising” (W. Habley, personal communication, December 1, 2018). Gordon assumed this identity of continuous learner or life-long learner for herself through her practice and on-going research as well as through using her research to create learning opportunities for academic advising stakeholders. Other articles in this issue by George Steele and Melinda McDonald examine Gordon’s advocacy for a teaching and learning approach to advising.

In 1978, Gordon and Weaver focused on professional development programming as a key component of the academic advising process. In this article, the authors identified a variety of techniques to address the learning style of advisors, exploring and applying theories on student development, career choice, and decision making in the educational environment. Gordon (1980, 1982) transitioned this program to a course for graduate students. It was an opportunity to share the field of academic advising using multiple theories with students interested in a career that focused on college students and offered a formal development opportunity for those individuals performing advising roles. As Gordon’s agenda on advisor professional development moved from articles to book chapters and edited volumes, it is clear that she advocated for advisors to seize an active role in their professional education and in the student learning experience in and out of the classroom.

Gordon understood that quality advising meant that students experienced the process of learning in the classroom as well as individually with an advisor. Her early work reveals her view that the changing of majors and career decision making is appropriate development in college due to the myriad of learning opportunities presented to students (Gordon, 1977). One tool to emerge from her belief was a career planning and decision-making course. Gordon, Adams, and Argeropoulos (1978) discussed the course and strategies designed to evaluate the effectiveness of this course on major and career decision making for undergraduate students. This early work resulted in Gordon’s collaboration with other scholars to create tools for major and career exploration that are still used by

students today (Gordon & Sears, 2003; Gordon & Steele, 2015).

Many would suggest that Gordon leveraged the entire academic advising program as another form of learning for undergraduate students. Whether through appointments, classes, books, or technology tools, the vision of the advising program was focused on learning, growing, and developing. As a scholar-practitioner, Gordon read, applied, and studied college student development. In a 1981 article that appeared in *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, she was clear in her belief that advising programs must center their mission and practice on human developmental theories, especially for students exploring majors and careers. She wrote, “When academic advisors or counselors incorporate developmental concepts in their daily contacts, many seemingly confused and anxious students become, in reality, normal, maturing, predictable individuals” (p. 434). Through understanding cognitive-structural development and psycho-social theories, the advising program contributed to student learning on many levels. One particular gem from this article (Gordon, 1981) is an explanation and integration of three theories, Super’s vocational developmental tasks, Tiedeman’s decision-making paradigm, and Perry’s cognitive student development stages, to explain the tasks that the student must accomplish at certain stages and how and when the student is developmentally ready to engage in those tasks. Gordon is an expert in explaining the theories in relationship to academic advising and approaches the article as a tool for advisor professional development that incorporates scholarship with practice. This article demonstrates her commitment to learning and her leadership as a scholar-practitioner.

Gordon knew that professional organizations, such as NACADA, that support the field of academic advising would remain relevant through a focus on learning. Thus, she and numerous colleagues facilitated survey research with the NACADA membership that allowed the organization to continue learning about academic advising members, student issues, and the field of academic advising. These surveys offer understanding on (a) advising for newly visible student populations, such as adult learners, (b) the evolution of advising professionals from faculty members to a mix of faculty members and professionals, and (c) the overall visibility of the field within the higher education organization (Gordon et al., 1988; Gordon & Polson, 1985; Polson & Gordon,

1988). Gordon's scholarship through articles, paper presentations, and books and her leadership with NACADA directed all involved in the advising process to embrace learning as a personal privilege and societal duty.

Late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gordon moved beyond journal articles to author entire books on academic advising. *The Handbook of Academic Advising* was published in 1992 by Greenwood Press. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* emerged with Gordon going from lone author in 1992 to the lead coeditor and collaborator on this comprehensive volume. The handbook explores history, models, practices, legal issues, student populations, organizations, technology, assessments, and advisor professional development and concludes with perspectives on the future of advising. All editions of this book from a solo project by Gordon to a large collaboration that valued relationships were intended for new or developed advisors, individuals supervising advisors, or anyone who interacted with students on a daily basis on behalf of student success. This volume was updated with a second edition in 2008 and still comes highly recommended by advisors all over the world. It is still the go-to resource when entering the advising world or needing a refresher on academic advising (Gordon, Habley, & Grites, 2008). NACADA not only benefited from collaborating with Gordon on numerous publications to support learning in the field but also was a base for creating relationships that she valued and promoted as a key tool for scholarship and practice.

### **Gordon's Contribution to Scholarship Addressing Relationships in Academic Advising**

I distinctly remember the only time Virginia and I actually conducted a faculty development workshop together. It was at William Woods College, where I observed Virginia engage the audience in a job-related exercise that was really a value exercise about characteristics of a specific job. It worked so well that I still use my own adaptation of it with faculty, students, and academic advisors, and it works every time. (T. Grites, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

Grites offered a strong example of how Gordon used her extensive skills to create relationships and

community on behalf of academic advising through interaction and teaching. From her early writing and presentations in the 1970s up to the last academic advising handbook that she coedited in 2008, she understood the power of relationships for advisors, advisees, advising programs, and professional organizations. What a relationship is, why it is important for practitioners and leaders, and how it evolves are questions in Gordon's scholarship that emerge from this vignette.

*Relationship* is defined by *Merriam Webster* as "the state of being related or interrelated." Scholars, practitioners, and professional organizations in the field of student affairs and academic advising signal the significance of relationships for accomplishing professional and institutional goals. For example, *Learning Reconsidered 2* identifies relationships as the first in the primary skill area needed for practitioner success (Keeling, 2006). Professional competencies from NACADA, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) blend the skills of developing connections between people and organizations with other skills and knowledge that support students in negotiating higher education. Schuh and Whitt (1999) credited partnerships as the foundation for achieving the institutional mission. Scholars, professional organizations, and guiding documents all point to the power of connection through relationships. Gordon appreciated the skill inherent in relationship development.

Gordon considered the art of relationship development to be a tool for creating a connection. We see this in her personal life based on this quote by a colleague: "I very much treasured my various relationships with Virginia Gordon. I valued her as a special friend and colleague as much as a mentor and teacher" (N. King, personal communication, December 1, 2018). Two examples from her early research efforts that acknowledge her commitment to relationship development focus on the "people bank" and evaluating advisor rapport. Gordon and Weaver (1978) highlighted the "people bank" as a group of alumni who offer detailed information on specific careers to advisors that would then be shared with students (also known as Partners in Education at The Ohio State University). Through Gordon's exploration of indecision among college students, she understood the power of connection for communicating information that addressed major and career decisions. Advisors need to connect to their community, including alumni, for the acquisition of this detailed information and

then plan how to communicate this information to the students.

In a paper delivered at the 1978 Annual Convention of American Personnel and Guidance Association, in reference to the Ohio State program, Gordon, Sheffler, and Weaver stated, “advisors are chosen for . . . their ability to relate to undergraduate students” (p. 4). Gordon recognized early that advisors need to build relationships with students to facilitate student learning and development. Thus, she built this skill into her research and practice on advisor development and evaluation. Later in the article, she included evaluation items such as “rapport with students and rapport with co-workers” (p. 16) that were addressed due to their high importance in the advising process.

Gordon felt it was important to offer tools that supported advisors in building relationships. One significant tool was the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. Gordon and Carberry (1984) wrote that when this type of tool was interpreted effectively, it aided the advisor in understanding the advisee to build a supportive and empowering relationship. Gordon’s focus on inventories as tools had an effect on relationship development and on her colleagues’ view of her and her work. Here is one example:

I think she had unique gifts as a person – she was a prolific writer, and she had the vision that academic advising could be grounded in research and practice. Also, she was single-minded – she didn’t let any nay-sayers stymie her efforts. From a personality-style standpoint, even though I think Virginia tested as an “INFP,” she had strong “ST” skills. She thought as an “NT” and wrote like one, but she managed to handle all of the important relationships and details of the coordination job with her strong F and S sides. She managed to meet deadlines and push through work and produce, which in and of itself is a powerful gift. In her lifetime, she wrote fifty books, monographs, book chapters, and journal articles on career and academic advising/counseling. (D. Kline, personal communication, December 1, 2018)

In a later article by Gordon and Kline (1989), she emphasized the importance of sensitivity to how and when information and support are offered to an undecided student. An advisor who has developed a connection based on trust with the

student knows when and how to administer information and support to continue the developmental process to help the student accomplish a task or stage. Gordon contributed to the literature on the advisor-advisee relationship, and she knew this relationship influenced both the advisor and advisee.

In her early work, Gordon (1978) stated that students needed to engage with campus resources and professionals for success. Networks, partnerships, and relationships are significant in exploring majors and careers, navigating the undergraduate experience, and developing into a citizen and community member. Students received these messages clearly through various components of the advising program and process. A significant addition to the advising program that emerged from Gordon’s practice and scholarship was incorporating advisors as teachers in courses on orientation to college as well as on major and career exploration. Through engagement on the classroom level mixed with her scholarly research, Gordon authored *Selecting a College Major: Exploration and Decision Making*. The fifth edition of this book emerged in 2004 and was co-authored by Susan J. Sears. This volume offers direction and practical activities for the undecided student and the “major-changer” and incorporates a new tool for academic advising—technology.

Gordon’s early scholarship and publications were tied to her professional relationships that emerged through NACADA, a professional organization focused on academic advising that offered colleagues space to discuss issues and trends as well as a robust sample for research. Gordon engaged NACADA colleagues through surveys to understand the current state of academic advising as well as to join her in reporting findings. This led to the NACADA Clearinghouse:

Another significant contribution that Virginia made to academic advising and NACADA was the beginning of what is now known as the National Clearinghouse for Academic Advising. Virginia began this venture by registering the clearinghouse with the Department of Education. In her office, she identified, collected, and codified all types of professional articles that related to academic advising. Furthermore, she responded (i.e. found, copied, and mailed information) to dozens of individual requests for information from students and other professionals who were seeking to enhance the literature base

for academic advising with their own research and writing. The Executive Office finally assumed this task in an electronic process and has maintained and managed the Clearinghouse since 2002. (T. Grites, personal communication, September 10, 2018)

These relationships not only explored issues but offered solutions to questions that focused on alternative advising for forced major changes (Gordon & Polson, 1985), professional development for advisors (Polson & Gordon, 1988), and identifying the characteristics of professional advising (Gordon et al., 1989). It is clear that relationships are a powerful tool for effective academic advising overall and that they motivated her research, practice, and writing about academic advising. As the opening vignette for this section clearly states, through relationships and collaborations, she encouraged other colleagues to think about practice and delivery.

### Conclusion

Virginia Gordon influenced the field of academic advising as an early scholar-practitioner who used a holistic approach with students and her colleagues in the field. In this article, her colleagues and friends, such as Dr. Tom Grites, shared personal stories that reflect on her entry into higher education and NACADA as a serious scholar and leader. As Gordon's research focused on student types, program design, professional development, and professionalization within academic advising, the academy became aware of undecided students, the synergy between academic and career advising, and the University College and courses that address student needs and advisor development. This article not only shares this focused research agenda, which was developed and accomplished by Gordon, but also addresses her vision for holistic approaches that value learning and relationships throughout the advising process and all stakeholders involved in academic advising. Virginia Gordon contributed to the field of academic advising through integrating her knowledge of student development literature with her personal practice to produce articles, presentations, book chapters, and books that have informed practice and inspired hundreds of advisors to follow in her scholar-practitioner footsteps.

Some of her most influential work includes *A Comprehensive Program of Academic Advising and Career Development for University Freshmen*

(Gordon, Sheffler, & Weaver, 1978), where Gordon sets the groundwork for undecided students to receive specialized advising within the University College. In addition, *Developmental Advising: The Elusive Ideal* (Gordon, 1994) highlights the concept of advising students beyond academics and as a holistic student (known as developmental advising). Finally, *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Gordon, Habley, et al., 2008) explores the foundation of academic advising and the ever-changing student population.

Whether people knew Gordon personally or through her scholarship, she motivated them to inform practice through the literature and inspired them to seek answers to questions that emerge through their advising practice. Some colleagues have been so inspired by Virginia Gordon, scholar-practitioner, that they share their knowledge through writing projects to produce articles, book chapters, and books that generate new knowledge and motivate all academic advisors to continue to learn, collaborate, and support students.

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#### Authors' Notes

Tammy Nguyen currently works at Utah Valley University where she manages a team of academic advisors within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Her previous role as an academic advisor for University

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Tammy is an Asian American woman who grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah, where she attended the University of Utah for a B.S. in psychology, B.S. in behavioral science and health, and a master's in public administration. While growing up in Utah, she developed her love for adventures outdoors. She can be reached at [TNguyen@sa.utah.edu](mailto:TNguyen@sa.utah.edu).

Thomas J. Grites has served as director of academic advising, interim director of teacher education, interim dean of social and behavioral sciences, assistant to the vice president for Academic Affairs, and currently, as assistant provost for academic support in his 40-plus years at Stockton University. He currently has responsibilities for academic orientation programming, first-year experience efforts, transfer student initiatives, liaison with the Division of Student Affairs, and various other projects. He also teaches regularly, primarily a seminar course for new transfer students.

He was one of the founding members of the National Academic Advising Association (now NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising) and served as its president for two terms. He currently serves as a senior editor of the NACADA Journal and regularly provides other services to NACADA.

Dr. Grites has written over 70 journal articles, book chapters, and professional reports. He has delivered more than 150 conference presentations and has conducted faculty development workshops and academic advising program reviews on over 100 campuses. He has served on the Absecon Board of Education for over 35 years, currently as president.

Tom earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Illinois State University and his PhD from the University of Maryland. Both institutions have

awarded him their distinguished Alumni Awards, and he was inducted into the College of Education Hall of Fame at Illinois State in October 2007. Tom was also named a Transfer Champion by the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students in 2015 and received NACADA's Bobbie Flaherty Service to NACADA Award in 2016. He can be reached at [Tom.grites@stockton.edu](mailto:Tom.grites@stockton.edu).

Sharon A. Aiken-Wisniewski, PhD, continuously engages with current and future academic advisors and student affairs practitioners as an associate professor, Career Line, in the Educational Leadership and Policy Department at the University of Utah. She teaches courses that focus on student persistence theories, higher education leadership, and student affairs practice. Her current service includes an appointment as coeditor for the NACADA Journal and a Fellow for the Excellence in Academic Advising Initiative. Through rich narratives of practice from students and colleagues and her previous roles as assistant vice president of Academic Affairs, associate dean of University College, and frontline advisor at the University of Arizona and Weber State University, she has developed an understanding of the scholar-practitioner identity in achieving the institutional mission. Her research agenda centers on questions that emerge from daily interactions between practitioners, leaders, and students as they create student success.

Sharon is a first-generation college student who grew up in rural Vermont and attended the University of Maine at Presque Isle for a B.A. in political science. An early adopter of distance education, she completed an M.S. in international studies at Troy State University at the United Kingdom campus and a certificate in enrollment management from the University of Florida. Her PhD is in educational leadership and policy from the University of Utah. Due to her love of nature, she lives in Utah, which offers unlimited opportunities for hiking with her partner, Alan. She can be reached at [sharon.aikenwisniewski@utah.edu](mailto:sharon.aikenwisniewski@utah.edu).