Limited time? Make the most of your advising appointments
by Tami Breske, Rebecca Despain, and Kristen Rigoni,
Center for Advising and Career Services

As advising week approaches, many advisors, especially new faculty advisors, have reported feeling overwhelmed with the responsibility of advising a full caseload of students while still keeping up with teaching responsibilities. We have found it can be very helpful to approach advising in the same manner as teaching -- have a plan, set goals, be prepared and utilize your resources.

When you think about it, you typically have 30 minutes each semester to meet with each of your advisees, while your classroom contact time can be 45 hours throughout the semester for a 3 credit class. In the classroom, if you don’t cover something one day, you can always take care of it during the next class session. You don’t have that “luxury” in advising – therefore we want to take this opportunity to provide some strategies to assist you in making the most of the advising time.

The Center for Advising and Career Services utilizes a developmental approach to academic advising. O'Banion (1972) defines advising as a process in which advisor and advisee enter a dynamic relationship respectful of the student's concerns. Ideally, the advisor serves as teacher and guide in an interactive partnership aimed at enhancing the student's self-awareness and fulfillment.

From a teaching standpoint, your preparation and delivery for a freshman level course looks much different than that of senior level courses. The same is true in advising. Here are some developmental advising strategies/check lists that we have found helpful:

**Advising Appointment Preparation**

*Things to do prior to each advising appointment*

- Review the student’s advising file and transcripts
- Update degree/program check sheet(s)
- Utilize degree evaluation (CAPP) on WyoWeb
- Check for transfer coursework on WyoWeb
- Look for “red flags” (multiple withdrawals, inappropriate classes, etc.)
- Send e-mail notification on how/when to schedule the advising appointment and explain expectations

**Topics to Cover Every Semester**

- Check mid-term grades on WyoWeb & ask the student how he/she feels classes are going
- Discuss academic standing (gpa concerns, probation, etc.)
- Confirm goals – Is the student still wanting current major? New minor(s)?
- Review degree check sheet /CAPP on WyoWeb
- Discuss any course sequencing or pre-requisite requirements
- Guide students in selecting courses
- Give student his/her PERC number
Freshman Advising
Advising freshmen students is a combination of being both a teacher and mentor. Not only are you introducing them to their selected discipline, you are introducing them to the advising process and teaching them how to be responsible and self-directed students at the University of Wyoming. If students have a firm understanding of the following items, subsequent advising sessions will be easier and allow time for a variety of more in depth discussions.

- Develop rapport – take a few minutes to get to know the student and help him/her feel at ease.
- Is student a member of a special population? eg: FIG, student athlete, Synergy, Honors, etc.
- Review WyoWeb and Bulletin
- Explain college vs. major vs. USP requirements
- Provide information on campus resources (see www.uwyo.edu/bettergrades)
- Review the academic calendar and point out deadlines
- Review test scores (eg: ACT, SAT, MPE, Language, etc.)
- Explain procedures and policies (eg: course withdrawal, add/drop, all school withdrawal)
- Assist in creating the student’s class schedule – freshmen tend to need more assistance in planning their “schedule” than selecting classes.

Sophomore Advising
Furr and Gannaway (1982) suggest that sophomore students may experience intensified conflicts over identity, in part due to the pressure to make decisions about career plans, values and lifestyle references. Because academic advising is one of the few structured services on campus in which all students have the opportunity to develop an on-going, one-to-one relationship with a concerned member of the college community, quality academic advising can be a major factor in the retention of students.

- Discuss internship information and other experiential learning within the discipline
- If appropriate, discuss an emphasis selection within the major
- Discuss clubs or organizations within the discipline
- Review university policies or procedures (if it seems necessary)
- Develop an academic plan with the student - “there is a light at the end of the tunnel”

Junior/Senior Advising
Juniors and seniors have now (hopefully) mastered the basics of the advising process. Most have developed successful study skills and are now focused more on planning for life after college.

- The advising appointment will focus more on the future
- Discuss possible career options within the field
- Discuss resume preparation, practice interviewing, job search, letters of reference
- Discuss graduate or professional school possibilities, as well as graduation application – deadlines & policies
- Advise on internships and research involvement

Noel (1985) states that it is the people who come face-to-face with students on a regular basis who provide the positive growth experiences for students that enable them to identify their goals and talents and learn how to put them to use. The caring attitude of college personnel is viewed as the most potent retention force on a campus (p. 17). Although the advising process is an integral part of a student’s educational experience, it does not have to be daunting for the advisor if you are prepared and utilize the resources available to you.

References