Focus on Academic Advising

This issue of *A Closer Look*... may seem like somewhat of a departure for our office. Traditionally, we use the publication to spotlight programs or services that are immediately identifiable as student affairs-related activities. At first glance, academic advising just doesn’t seem to fit the mold. However, the Division of Student Affairs is closely involved with academic advising at UNCG. The Spartan Orientation and Registration program (SOAR) has been associated with academic advising for years. For the vast majority of students, their first contact with advising is at SOAR. Although advising is separate and apart from the preparation and conduct of the SOAR program, the coordination of these activities is essential to our mission of bringing the student into the UNCG community.

It is in this spirit of working together to bring students into the UNCG community that we present this discussion of academic advising. Office of Student Affairs Evaluation and Research staff worked with members of the Office of Orientation and the Advising Council to present a review of the advising process both here at UNCG and elsewhere. Beginning on page eight, we examine some of the data that UNCG collects on advising. These data include information from the Sophomore and Senior Surveys, the Spartan Experience Questionnaire, and the SOAR Program Student Evaluation Survey.

We wish to thank the members of the Advising Council as well as Robert Ross (Director of Student Academic Services), Lucy Robbins (former chair of the Advising Council), and Annette Cline (Teaching Fellows Program) for their assistance with this project.

Models of Academic Advising

A review of current literature reveals a plethora of approaches for academic advising. Each espouses a particular philosophy while allowing for flexibility when putting the theory into practice. The academic units at UNCG provide evidence of the use of multiple approaches when offering academic advising.

**Engagement Model**

“The engagement approach to academic advising assumes that the primary academic advisor is the frontline mentor in assisting student-advisees in identifying and clarifying their personal academic goals and objectives. The underlying assumption for encouraging interactions between advisors and students is that such relationships will culminate in the successful completion of the academic program, leading to commencement and the awarding of a degree. Both the advisor and the advisee identify and clarify the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, the advisee’s learning style and competencies, and the advisor’s strengths and weaknesses as a mentor and guide. If both student-advisee and teacher-advisor approach the relationship as a guided learning experience, then each will emerge with new and enhanced competencies that can be easily adapted and applied to future interactions.” (Yarborough, 2002)
Counseling Liaison Model
“Counselors in a counseling liaison model are not only knowledgeable about the appropriate courses for the student but are also trained to deal with and are most capable of dealing with the numerous other personal aspects vital to student success. The counseling liaison role is unique because it requires that the counselor develop rapport not only with his or her students but also with the faculty in his or her assigned academic department. [W]hen counseling and advisement are linked with the academic departments, it . . . allows for a consistent and reciprocal relationship between and among the counselor, faculty, and student. [T]he concept of counseling liaisons provides for effective collaborative relationships in which role models are provided for students to emulate. Collaboration also conveys to students that more than one college constituency cares about them and is invested in their success.” (Kadar, 2001)

Developmental Advising
“Developmental academic advising recognizes the importance of interactions between the student and the campus environment, it focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person’s own life stage of development.

In 1972, Terry O’Banion proposed a five-step advising model that is now generally recognized as the origin of a developmental approach to academic advising. This model recognizes that the advising process involves a set of sequential steps. O’Banion suggests that students should be responsible for making decisions throughout the advising process.” (King, 2005)

O’Banion’s  Developmental Advising Model

√ Exploration and confirmation of life goals and values.

√ Exploration and confirmation of career goals.

√ Selection of a major or program of study to achieve life, career, and educational goals.

√ Selection of courses in any given term.

√ Scheduling of courses.

Prescriptive Advising
“Prescriptive advising is a style of advising that is characterized by: a top-down approach, hierarchical relationship, one-directional flow of information and ideas, and the student as passive recipient.” (Lowenstein, 1999)

Intrusive advising
“The intrusive model of advising is action-oriented to involving and motivating students to seek help when needed. Utilizing the good qualities of prescriptive advising (expertise, awareness of student needs, structured programs) and of developmental advising (relationship to a student’s total needs), intrusive advising is a direct response to identified academic crises with a specific program of action. A direct contact is established with an advisor who deals candidly with the student’s academic situation when the student has maximum motivation to accept assistance. [T]he student is intrusively placed in a position where he/she must do academic planning within the parameters of self-motivation. [S]tructured advising programs are enhanced by a student’s involvement in contract modules. Work load of an advisor becomes related to the academic processes in a student’s life rather than just the registration process.” (Earl, 2005)

UNCG Models of Academic Advising

Demonstrating the flexibility that makes UNCG successful, each school follows the advising model which works best for its needs and students. During SOAR, students are able to meet with a major-specific advisor in a small group setting. This arrangement makes conversation easier and helps students feel connected to a faculty member. This model of advising carries over into various schools around campus throughout the academic year.

The College of Arts and Sciences (CASA) uses a one-on-one model of advising during SOAR and continues to use this model throughout a student’s career at UNCG. Education, Business, and Nursing all use group advising for the first two years of the student’s academic studies. Once the student meets the requirements to be accepted into the school, he is assigned to an individual faculty advisor. The School of Music follows a different model that accommodates the unique needs of its degree programs. Students’ academic progress and course fulfillment is monitored by Dianna Carter while faculty advisors are assigned based on individual students’ area of performance.
A working example of the integrative approach to advising comes from the Bryan School of Business and Economics. In this School, six professional advisors work with six faculty advisors to help pre-major students prepare for a career in business. Pre-major business students formally meet in a small group with an assigned advisor. In these small group meetings, students are able to get more personal, one-on-one attention from a faculty member. Recently, the Bryan School has scaled down the number of students per group while it has increased the number of advisors per session.

With a developmental approach to academic advising, the Bryan School places responsibility with students to be prepared for their advising meetings and to advocate for their needs and goals. Before coming to an advising meeting, students should already have an idea of what courses they wish to take for the upcoming semester and should be prepared with relevant questions for the advisor.

Once students complete the university’s general requirements for undergraduates, they are formally admitted into the Bryan School and assigned an individual advisor. At this point, the mentoring relationship is more fully developed as the student receives individualized attention aimed at creating a successful collegiate experience.

In addition to its developmental stance to advising, the Bryan School also engages in some intrusive advising to identify students in need. Faculty members report unsatisfactory grades, especially near the beginning of courses. Numerous communiqués are sent to students to alert them to resources that can help them be more successful, once they are identified to be in need of academic assistance. Often the School encourages students to utilize the knowledge and expertise of their academic advisor.

Finally, taking its cue from the Advising Council, the Bryan School utilizes the Spartan Success model (see “Advising Council” for more details) when offering advising services for students. This again ties in with the developmental advising approach. Also, the school is making a conscious effort to assess its advising services. Regular evaluations of student satisfaction with their advising experience are a part of course evaluations. The result? The scores lead the department to feel confident that its work is meaningful and is helping students achieve their goals.
Advising Council

The Advising Council is guided in its activities by UNCG’s academic advising mission statement that seeks to “engage students in making informed decisions regarding their educational, career, and life goals” as well as the academic advising vision statement that “defines academic advising as adding value to the education of students through connections, relationships, and community building, resulting in better retention and loyalty to the University.” With representatives from enrollment services, orientation, and each academic unit, the Council meets twice a month to discuss advising issues such as the logistics of offering services and the needs that should be addressed for advising to be successful in each school. Through adherence to UNCG’s mission and vision statements for academic advising, Council members have witnessed significant growth in accomplishments for the group since its inception in 1998.

Rather than working as a body insulated from other areas of student support, the Advising Council is an active collaborator with the Office of Admissions, University Registrar’s Office (URO), and Student Academic Services (SAS). The Council works with admissions during recruiting events, with SAS to develop advisor training opportunities, with the URO to negotiate the logistics of course offerings for incoming freshmen, and with orientation staff to determine how best to meet the needs of academic units and students during summer orientation and registration. Members of the Council believe their work extends beyond academic advising to encompass the total student experience.

As a group looking forward to the future, the Advising Council has been involved in initiatives such as the Master Advisor program as well as its showpiece the Spartan Success model. Through the Master Advisor program, the Advising Council offers a series of workshops designed to train faculty and professional advisors on campus each semester. Topics include Academic Policies and Procedures, Advising At-Risk Students, Campus Resources, Understanding GEC Requirements, and Appreciative Advising. Advisors who complete the training are recognized as Master Advisors and receive a $500 travel stipend. To date, the Council has trained over 90 advisors and 25 advisors are participating this spring. Spartan Success is a long term project that embraces a more developmental model of advising. Students begin their academic career by assessing their personal, educational, and career goals. From there, students move through a series of steps, working with faculty and professional advisors to select courses, identify appropriate campus resources for assistance, and evaluate decisions impacting their future. The Council sees the potential for the Spartan Success model to be used by all departments with its focus on the entire student experience, particularly emphasizing advising and mentoring. Spartan Success can help make the time a student spends at UNCG more meaningful. As the implementation phase of this program approaches, the Council will seek feedback and buy-in from advisors and students.

Currently, members of the Council have turned their focus to an assessment of advising services offered at UNCG. As current Chair Lucy Robbins explains, “We’re looking for other ways to capture how well we’re doing other than satisfaction ratings...[on student surveys].” The team hopes to develop measurement strategies for determining what is effective advising and for assessing where advising is most successful. Pursuing this type of assessment will allow the Council and the university to become more focused on student learning outcomes, which will build upon the more traditional type of assessment measures that emphasize student satisfaction.

Members of the Council routinely attend conferences that bring together advising professionals from across the country. They attend these meetings to gain ideas and to share their own knowledge. For example, members of the Council presented the Spartan Success model at the NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) national conference in October of 2005. The true benefit of this type
Since an internal re-organization in November 2005, the Student Academic Services Office has been able to shift some of its focus to offering more academic advising services. Much of the data management process of registration moved to the Registrar’s Office, along with three staff members, which allows SAS staff the opportunity to offer assistance to undergraduate students as well as faculty.

Within the advising community in SAS, eight professional advisors with master’s level degrees work in a supplemental capacity with the university’s faculty and staff. Through academic colleges, undergraduates are assigned to a faculty advisor or an advising center. This placement is based on the students’ majors as well as their completion of all university academic requirements. SAS has a primary case load of visiting students along with a special program through the School of Nursing. Nursing is a very competitive program with a minimum GPA requirement mandatory for admission. SAS works with freshmen in the program with a GPA of 2.0 or less and upperclassmen with a GPA of 2.7 or less. The goal is to help these students complete an internal transfer to another degree program that will lead to success. In addition, SAS hopes to encourage these students to remain with UNCG.

Robert Ross, Director of Student Academic Services, sees his office as a place of supplemental advising support. SAS staff will meet with any student, regardless of major, to give advice about university requirements and policies, to lend guidance for exploring majors, or to assist with any academic difficulty a student may face. In addition, staff members are knowledgeable about the general education requirements, the process to request a course schedule overload, and the best way to handle a withdrawal from courses after the deadline. Along with this advising resource for students, SAS also works with faculty members. If a faculty advisor has questions about degree requirements outside of his academic college, the SAS staff can help. SAS is also responsible for the training faculty advisors receive as a part of the SOAR experience.

Aside from the one-on-one assistance SAS staff offer, many reach out to a larger portion of the campus community by teaching UNS 101 and SAS 101. UNS 101 helps students new to the university learn how to be successful in their academic pursuits. SAS courses are designed as an intervention strategy for students on academic probation. Again, the focus is on how best to cope with university level requirements and expectations while maintaining a level of success.

Student Academic Services

When Karen Gilbert takes the leadership of the Council this spring she will have the pleasure of working with a group of individuals dedicated to excellence in advising. Already, members of the team are working to develop and pursue goals for the future. Eventually, the Council hopes to develop and distribute a handbook for faculty and professional advisors focused on advising that will span across academic units. This comprehensive information will help academic advisors be more effective partners with their advisees. In addition, faculty and professional advisors will become a more important piece of the early warning system to identify and assist struggling students. And, of course, the combined efforts of these initiatives will keep Council members focused on the importance of graduation and retention rates. With a successful academic experience and a personal connection with a member of the university, students will have a better chance for degree completion and fulfillment of career and life goals.
Annette Cline, currently the Assistant Director of the UNCG Teaching Fellows Program, lived in the midst of significant change and program evolution during her years as a staff member in Student Academic Services. Among the myriad revisions which took place between 2002 and the present, the one that Cline found most memorable was the improvements in the organization and delivery of SOAR.

By the fall of 2004, the enrollment of students at UNCG had increased to the point that revisions were necessary in the new student advising and registration process. Before changes were implemented, students would come to campus during the summer, meet by department as a large group, select courses, enter the computer lab, and hope to find the courses needed. Often, students in later sessions of SOAR would be unable to register for required courses because all available slots were full. In addition, the group advising session made it difficult for new students to establish a more personal mentoring relationship with a faculty member. Both areas of concern were addressed for the advising and registration sessions in 2004.

To start the process, Cline developed a course availability policy designed to ensure students would be able to register for requisite courses and would also plan to cover all general education courses during their first two years. To assist in the effort, Nancy Bucknall, from the College of Arts and Sciences Advising Center, created a schedule of available courses that began with a low number of available seats per course and slowly raised the capacity. In addition, she would add sections as necessary to ensure incoming freshmen were able to register for necessary courses. To further the efficiency of the course availability process, Timothy Johnston, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, requested that each department make projections for sophomores, juniors, and seniors in order to anticipate the number of courses needed as students continue their academic journey. Also, these projections would allow individual departments to better allocate resources.

The other area of concern, faculty advising, also underwent an overhaul through the efforts of the Student Academic Services office. SAS coordinates the process for enlisting and training faculty advisors who work with the freshmen during SOAR. In fall 2003, SAS began to offer separate training sessions for new and experienced SOAR advisors. In fall 2004, this training evolved into two separate days so more attention could be given to new faculty advisors. During their training, they spent more time learning how to navigate the registration system to make the process more successful and less stressful for students.

To supplement this advising training, SAS has developed an Advisor’s Notebook with registration guidelines, SOAR schedules, advising tools, and even an alpha listing of courses designated as freshman friendly or as particularly difficult.
Since her tenure began as Director of the Office of Orientation, Dr. Kim Sousa-Peoples has witnessed the development of the collaborative relationship among her office, Student Academic Services, and the UNCG Advising Council. The purpose of this relationship is the introduction to and the inclusion of new students, most of whom are first-time freshmen, into the UNCG community. Spartan Orientation, Advising and Registration (SOAR) is the vehicle for this collaborative effort. Through this program, students learn about university services, receive advice from trained orientation leaders, and successfully complete the advising and registration process for the first time. The efficiency and efficacy of the program is the result of the efforts of Sousa-Peoples, a group of well-trained student orientation leaders, and trained advisors from across the campus.

As an active member of the Advising Council, Sousa-Peoples is in an ongoing conversation with the academic departments to determine the Council members’ needs and how best to address them during SOAR. She has learned first hand about the challenges and the process of academic advising. This partnership keeps the advising representatives from each school aware of the logistics of presenting a successful orientation experience. Even though the Office of Orientation is not specifically responsible for academic advising and registration, it is a partner in the process.

The Offices of Orientation and Student Academic Services (SAS) use their relationship to prepare the academic advisors who will assist the incoming freshmen with their first registration. Advising coordinators from the academic colleges select faculty to work as advisors during SOAR. Then SAS organizes and offers training for these advisors from among the faculty and staff. During their training, Sousa-Peoples spends time explaining that their interaction with the new students extends beyond advice about which courses to select and how to navigate UNCGenie. SOAR is a positive experience designed to alleviate concerns and fears while promoting enthusiasm and excitement about attending UNCG. As such, Sousa-Peoples asks the academic advisors to remember that these are often young students who are not always completely clear about their major(s) or their decision to attend the university. This initial contact between a member of the academic community and the incoming freshmen will have a definite impact. The success of this interaction is important for the success of the orientation process as well as for the success of the student.

In addition to providing the academic advisors who will lead students through the registration process, Robert Ross and the SAS staff have created a presentation for use during SOAR entitled “Got Classes?” The orientation leaders use this information to ensure a more efficient process when students enter the computer lab and select courses. During this presentation, students have the chance to go through the entire registration process before sitting down at the computer. They learn how to navigate UNCGenie, how to read and understand the course bulletin, how to recognize the language unique to registration, and even how to label their major and identify their school. Having covered this vitally important material during day one of SOAR, students are better prepared to complete their registration leading to fewer complications for UNCG staff on day two of SOAR.

The Office of Orientation also receives logistical guidance from the Registrar’s Office during the second day of SOAR. When the registration process begins on day two, students meet in small groups with an academic advisor. They then move to a computer lab where the staff from the Registrar’s Office supports the registration process. Additionally, and often most importantly, the Registrar’s staff makes an effort to allocate sections of necessary courses for each section of SOAR. In this way, students attending later in the summer will not be shut out of morning and afternoon courses. They will also have the opportunity to register for required general education courses.

Sousa-Peoples believes an important element of her job is establishing and maintaining rapport with each department on campus that is directly involved with new student orientation and registration. With her involvement in the university’s Advising Council, she is able to respond to concerns about the amount of time allotted to registration during SOAR. In addition, Sousa-Peoples is able to assure faculty members that the emotional support and enthusiasm students receive during SOAR is important for creating a less stressful mood. As much importance as the ‘A’ (Advising) and the ‘R’ (Registration) have in SOAR, Sousa-Peoples reminds the academic community at UNCG that the ‘S’ (Spartan) and the ‘O’ (Orientation) are just as necessary to prepare incoming freshmen for a successful first-year experience. When reflecting on the collaborative nature of registration during SOAR, Sousa-Peoples said, “It’s a good example of advanced planning and a team approach” to help the freshmen so they don’t fail. The efficiency of the
registration process and the concern of the academic advisors working during SOAR create for new students the right blend of realistic advice in course selection, confidence in their ability to succeed as college students, and a greater potential for academic success.

What we have learned about advising at UNCG

At present, it is very difficult to assess the effectiveness of academic advising at UNCG despite the fact that data about advising are collected. Academic areas approach student advising differently according to school policy, disciplinary best-practice, student needs, and tradition. The fact that there is no single standard practice makes a comprehensive comparative analysis of these data very difficult. On its face, this would not seem to be a problem as between-school comparisons are not likely of particular interest or benefit. What would be of interest would be longitudinal analyses of the effectiveness of advising practices, addressing the question of whether advising practices are consistently meeting expectations. These, too, are difficult because the process of advising at UNCG has changed often in recent years. Upon first reflection, this does not bode well for the analyst who seeks data with which to assess success, benefit, etc. However, the fact that the advising process HAS been so dynamic in recent years suggests that assessment, even if anecdotal, is being used to change and improve the program.

The Office of Student Affairs Research and Evaluation reviewed several sources of data that relate to advising and we provide a summary of our findings below. Public sources of data for academic advising included the advising evaluations done every year as a part of the regular SOAR Program Evaluation, the UNCG Sophomore and Senior surveys, UNCG’s Baccalaureate Degree Recipient Survey (1-year and 3-year post graduation), and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). We did not wish to make comparisons between schools so we did not pursue school-level advising data. A more comprehensive analysis of advising on this campus should include these data, if they exist.

None of these data are matched to any later student perceptions data so we cannot directly compare or contrast in a longitudinal sense student perceptions of academic advising at the beginning of their academic career and the data provided in the sophomore and senior years. The conclusions that we present here are tentative.

For the past two years, the SOAR Program Evaluation has asked students to rate their satisfaction on five different advising program dimensions: their comfort with their academic advisor, the helpfulness of their advisor in creating a schedule that fits the students’ course of study, their satisfaction with the selection of courses, and the approachability of UNCG faculty and staff.

A summary of SOAR evaluation data for the past four years is shown in Table 1. Of immediate note are the increases in the percent of favorable responses (Strongly agree/Agree) over this four-year span for the advising-specific items. The percent of students agreeing that they felt comfortable with their advisor jumped almost 10% over this four-year period. The percent satisfied with course scheduling and selection rose 4% during the same period. A particularly positive reflection on the staff and faculty of UNCG is the fact that students’ perceptions that staff and faculty were approachable and informative remained at or above 97% over the four-year period.

These data are certainly encouraging as they reflect students’ perceptions of what amounts to their first real plunge into the university community. However, it is important to note that the assessment of the significance of cross-year comparisons is difficult at best due to numerous changes that were made to the method of administration of the evaluation over the course of this four-year period.

Clearly, UNCG faculty and staff are leaving a very strong positive impression with new students. The vast majority of students are rating the process and product of the initial advising contact very high. There doesn’t seem to be a great deal of room for improvement at the point of first contact so the question becomes, what happens during the next several years and how do students’ perceptions of advising change as they move through the years. Sadly, we have no data to help us answer this question directly as none of the SOAR evaluation data are matchable to data in other surveys. However, we may be able to draw some conclusions by comparing these early perceptions with the perceptions of other students who are farther along in their studies. We will draw this other perception data from the Graduating Senior Survey and the Spartan Experience Questionnaire.

We have data from the Sophomore and Senior Surveys on five advising dimensions including access to advisor, sufficient time with advisor, accuracy of course/degree information, advisor knowledge of campus policies and overall advising services.
Table 1: Percent responding ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘Agree’ (left) and ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’ (right) on the advising items found on the SOAR Student Evaluation Results Across Four Years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt comfortable with my advisor</td>
<td>86% / 14%</td>
<td>92% / 8%</td>
<td>94% / 6%</td>
<td>95% / 5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>My advisor helped me create a schedule that fits my course of study</td>
<td>88% / 12%</td>
<td>85% / 15%</td>
<td>93% / 7%</td>
<td>92% / 8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my selection of courses</td>
<td>90% / 10%</td>
<td>87% / 13%</td>
<td>93% / 7%</td>
<td>94% / 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UNCG faculty and staff were approachable and informative</td>
<td>98% / 2%</td>
<td>97% / 3%</td>
<td>98% / 2%</td>
<td>98% / 2%</td>
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Notes:
The number of respondents reflected in each percentage ranged from 1745 (2002) to 578 (2005) depending on the item and the year of the survey. The disparity is due to changes in the administration of the instrument. Since 2004, the evaluation has been administered over the web rather than during the SOAR program. All percents are rounded.

Table 2 shows a summary comparison of the advising items from the Sophomore Survey for the 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004 academic years. The pattern of responding that emerges from this table is somewhat convoluted and does not reflect the disparity found when the data are disaggregated among the individual schools. We will address only aggregated university data in this report. Response rates by school are available from the Office of Institutional Research.

The drop in satisfaction with advising from 1998 to 2000 is unmistakable. Most notably, students’ satisfaction with access to their advisor, rated as good or excellent, drops from 80% in 1998 to 71% in 2000. Likewise, satisfaction with overall advising services dropped in the same period from 77% to 71%.

By 2004, satisfaction had yet to rise to 1998 levels for the access, sufficient time, and accurate information/course scheduling dimensions.

It is difficult to know what is responsible for this sudden decrease in satisfaction in 2000. Conversations with UNCG staff that were involved with student advising during that time noted that several issues, such as increased enrollment, led to course scheduling and other difficulties that likely affected students’ ratings of advising services offered at that time. Changes were made by 2003 that helped to reduce the number of closed courses. Several other changes as described earlier in this document most certainly affected the way sophomores felt about their advising.

Table 2: Percent responding ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’ (left) and ‘Fair’ or ‘Poor’ (right) on the advising items found on the Sophomore Survey Results Across Seven Years.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to advisor</td>
<td>80% / 18%</td>
<td>71% / 27%</td>
<td>77% / 22%</td>
<td>76% / 21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sufficient time with advisor</td>
<td>71% / 28%</td>
<td>67% / 31%</td>
<td>69% / 29%</td>
<td>69% / 28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accurate information about degree and course schedule</td>
<td>73% / 26%</td>
<td>71% / 26%</td>
<td>71% / 27%</td>
<td>72% / 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of campus policies and procedures</td>
<td>73% / 26%</td>
<td>71% / 25%</td>
<td>72% / 25%</td>
<td>73% / 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall services</td>
<td>77% / 23%</td>
<td>71% / 27%</td>
<td>75% / 24%</td>
<td>77% / 20%</td>
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Notes:
The number of respondents reflected in each percentage ranged from 330 to 591 depending on the item and the year of the survey. Cell percents do not add up to 100%. The ‘missing’ percentage is composed of ‘Do not know/Did not use’ responses. All percents are rounded.

These data can be found on the website of the Office of Institutional Research: http://ire.uncg.edu/surveys_new.asp#GSS
Table 3 shows a summary comparison of the advising items from the Graduating Senior Survey for the 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004 academic years. General satisfaction, rated as good or excellent, is above 70% for every item at every year. The percent of students satisfied with their access to and their time with their advisor tends to go up slightly with time but this is difficult to distinguish from random fluctuation, as does students’ satisfaction with the accuracy of advising information.

Although little can be said for certain in light of the lack of better data, a few interesting patterns emerge. Perhaps most noticeable is the INCREASE in dissatisfaction from 1998 to 2000 and a subsequent decrease in dissatisfaction in 2002 and 2004 across several items in Table 3. Many changes were made in the way advising was organized and delivered in this time period so it is impossible to attribute a cause for these changes.

The lack of truly longitudinal data prevents us from closely examining the effectiveness of advising on our students across time. However, a comparison of Tables 2 and 3 may lead us to suspect that sophomores and seniors perceive the experience of advising differently. Alternatively, it may be the nature of advising that changes as students move from under- to upper classmen. Generally speaking, the percent of satisfied seniors is slightly higher than the percent of satisfied sophomores for most of the five items shown in Tables 2 and 3. Interestingly, the marked dip found in sophomore satisfaction ratings in 2000 (Table 2) is not as pronounced as the dip in the senior satisfaction rating in 2000 (Table 3).

It is quite possible that selective memory or the excitement of graduation influences the way students respond to the advising items on the Graduating Senior Survey. However, it is also possible that the survey is actually reflecting a change in the nature of advising as students move through the university. Participants in the Graduating Senior Survey may be remembering more fondly that aspect of junior and senior advising that emphasizes career preparation rather than academic planning and course selection. It is not possible to evaluate this with the data presented here. To more fully understand how students experience the advising process, we need to begin a coordinated assessment effort that will allow us to evaluate students through the entire advising process from matriculation through graduation.

The last pieces of data that we have come from the Spartan Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), both of which contain the item ‘How frequently have you talked about your career plans with faculty or your advisor?’ on both of these instruments this item was rated on a four-point scale: Never, Occasionally, Often, and Very Often.

Responses for the 2003 and 2005 administration of the SEQ appear in Tables 4 and 5. Consistent with the trends found in the sophomore and senior survey data, a greater percentage of seniors reported talking to faculty and/or an advisor about a career ‘Very Often’ or ‘Often’ compared to sophomores. This was true for the 2003 and 2005 respondents. However, these differences were not large. Not surprisingly, few seniors in either year reported that they never talked about their career with a faculty member or advisor.

Table 3: Percent responding ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’ (left) and ‘Fair’ or ‘Poor’ (right) on the advising items found on the Graduating Senior Survey Results Across Seven Years.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to advisor</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient time with advisor</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurate information about</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree and course schedule</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of campus policies</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and procedures</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall services</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
The number of respondents reflected in each percentage ranged from 635 to 879 depending on the item and the year of the survey. Cell percents do not add up to 100%. The ‘missing’ percentage is composed of ‘Do not know/Did not use’ responses. All percents are rounded. These data can be found on the website for the Office of Institutional Research: http://ire.uncg.edu/surveys_new.asp#GSS
The most interesting results to come from the NSSE 2005 are that UNCG seniors were statistically significantly more likely to report talking with a faculty member or an advisor about their career than were seniors at our peer institutions or other doctoral-granting institutions. This was not true in the 2001 NSSE sample.

It is very difficult to reach a conclusion about the efficacy based on these data. UNCG faculty and staff rightly tailor student advising to meet the needs of each school and the students within their various programs. We did not directly compare those advising data for those programs as such would be a particular tricky and sensitive task. Anyone wishing to view the data shown here by individual school can visit the Office of Institutional Research’s website for more information. What we did learn from this exercise is that there are important aspects of the advising process that need to be more closely examined. Students’ perceptions as to the effectiveness of the advising process appear to change over time. It would be useful to more closely examine how advising changes over the course of a student’s academic career. It would also be useful to examine how advising influences the students’ post-academic career. Such studies would best be conducted at the school level wherein differences in the advising programs of each academic area can be controlled.

We are, in effect, suggesting a comprehensive assessment effort. Data collection will have to be standardized to a certain extent so that each school is collecting some of the same information. This information should be collected longitudinally so that we can examine the effects of advising across the student’s academic lifespan and beyond.

### References


**Kadar, R.S. (Fall 2001).** A counseling liaison model of academic advising. *Journal of College Counseling, 4*, 174-178.


### Credits


### Table 4: Response to the item “I have talked about career plans with faculty/my advisor” from the 2003 Spartan Experience Questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average: 10% Very Often, 25% Often, 43% Occasionally, 23% Never

Note: 926 students responded to this item: 230 Freshmen, 200 Sophomores, 243 Juniors, and 253 Seniors.

### Table 5: Response to the item “I have talked about career plans with faculty/my advisor” from the 2005 Spartan Experience Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomores</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniors</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average: 12% Very Often, 23% Often, 45% Occasionally, 20% Never

Note: 769 students responded to this item: 155 Freshmen, 190 Sophomores, 207 Juniors, and 217 Seniors.