

What is Good Advising

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WHY TODAY?

Our goal for this session is to lay foundation for ongoing conversation about how academic advising contributes to what makes Mills worth attending and how we can foster more of that contribution and communicate to the world what it is.

WHY AT ALL?

Some people in/around higher education are chomping at the bit to turn "outcomes assessment" on academic advising. For the most part, their work exhibits limited understanding of what advising means at a place like Mills and the value it adds to the curriculum. There is a studied mediocrity about the reports, proclamations, typologies, and measurement instruments produced by self-proclaimed advising experts. What they are describing is not what we do nor is it what we want to do nor what we think it is educationally valuable to do. This project is about taking an affirmative stand against this creeping "mediocritization" of higher education.

Our long term goal is to produce a document that teachers like us at institutions like Mills will recognize as describing what they do outside the classroom that makes their schools the valuable student experience that they are.

A RESEARCH PROJECT

This short exercise is meant to be the first step in ongoing conversation and research project the goal of which is to document how quality liberal arts college advising is different from what currently passes as "academic advising" in the literature (dominated by things like "my adviser tells me about the rules and regulations."). If you would be interested in participating as a researcher (as opposed to as a "researched" as today), let Dan Ryan or Andy Workman know.

This project is motivated by dissatisfaction with what's out there as "research on advising" – from conversations with our colleagues we are confident we can do better.

TODAY'S TASK

Informal discussions with advisers suggest one certain finding: good academic comes in many different forms; these vary from adviser to adviser and from student to student and over the course of a student's academic career. Further, good advising is an ongoing conversation between the student and a competent and concerned adult, a conversation which is focused on her development as a student and a person. Over and over again advisers say that they have multiple ways of advising, a whole repertoire of interactions/exchanges/discussions depending on what a student is perceived to need at any given point.

The goal of this exercise is to collectively assemble a portrait of these repertoires – not any particular adviser's repertoire, but the repertoire of the Mills faculty as a whole.

Part One (completed individually): Name and describe 4 to 6 different kinds of interactions you have with advisees. Example: the "so what's up with this academic deficiency notice? What's going on in that class?" talk or the "what are you going to be when you 'grow up'? why?" conversation.

What Would You Call It	Describe context and/or interaction and/or what it does for the advisee
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Part Two: Go around the table with each person naming and describing one of their interaction styles. Table recorder makes a note of the item and then just asks for a quick of hands and records whether this is pretty much universal or relatively idiosyncratic.

What Would You Call It	How Common?	Describe context and/or interaction and/or what it does for the advisee
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		

Part Three: We go around the room and ask table reporters to give us one of their relatively universal ones and one or two of their more unusual ones, invite discussion and comments.