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Academic Advising Tools through a Metacognitive Lens

Heather Mitchell, Kim Kleinman, and Ronald Daniel
Webster University

BACKGROUND / MOTIVATION

Metacognitive practices in advising have been documented (e.g., Freeman, 2008; Sullivan-Vance, 2008), and the literature is full of suggestions on how to support purposeful student engagements and learning outcomes through advising (e.g., Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Willcoxson & Wynder, 2010). For example, academic advising is a type of student learning, and we know metacognitive approaches are one best practice to improve such learning. By infusing academic advising with such metacognitive tools, we enhance intentional student engagement through the process of advising.

Why do I have to take this class? How is this requirement going to benefit me? When will I ever use this information again? Comments similar to these three questions led us to develop the advising syllabus and curriculum planner as tools to use in academic advising. Purposeful advising is a critical component of higher education as we prepare students to be responsible, global citizens in the 21st century. Additionally, metacognition can be an extremely useful tool in an effort to promote student achievement.

NUTS AND BOLTS / METHOD

This report provides a brief overview of two advising practices (i.e., advising syllabi and curriculum planners) we use to help deliver successful, engaging experiences for students. The advising syllabus and planner are both metacognitive in nature and thus can help each student and advisor remain intentional and reflective of the student's college career. Webster University's advising center and individual faculty in the college refine as needed the advising syllabus for use with students. Additionally, curriculum planners, or the "Planner", originally developed at Virginia Tech University, provide a helpful organization tool for students to use while laying out their academic path in higher education. Students at Webster University's Geneva, Switzerland campus and students at Webster's St. Louis campus have benefitted from these tools.

Contact information: Heather Mitchell, Associate Professor Psychology Webster University hmittchell33@webster.edu; Kim Kleinman, Director Undergraduate Advising Webster University kleinman@webster.edu; & Ronald Daniel, Director London Webster University ronalddaniel93@webster.edu

Advising Syllabus. Such a syllabus includes an advising mission or statement/ philosophy of advising and allows advisors to outline any expectations and responsibilities for both students and advisors. See Appendix A: Undergraduate Advising Syllabus as an example. Learning outcomes and a timeline / calendar of advising events are key components of such a syllabus as well as a list of resources an advisee may find useful. Advising is an essential component of an educational mission, and an advising syllabus helps specify the importance of advising similar to the way course syllabi are a regular part of every student's classroom education. Individual advisors, either professional advisors from the University's Advising Center or individual faculty advisors personalize the specific criteria, descriptions, learning outcomes, and responsibilities for their advisees.

The Planner. Both paper and online versions of the Planner have been created. Computer science students at Virginia Tech developed the online version of the Planner as a way of "saving" the first draft of their holistic academic plan including curricular and extra-curricular components. Both an individual student and their advisor must provide the specific knowledge and details concerning career information, interests, and plans such as graduate school, technology competences, and language competences. Students now commonly use paper versions of the Planner, which requires crucial information such as student's course and activity interests as well as details about the availability of those courses and/or activities. See Appendix B: Planner Template.

Specifically, the Planner provides students with an opportunity to "map out" their remaining time, requirements, and other activities so students can make the most of their college experience. Students are asked to review the requirements for obtaining their specific degree and they are provided with various resources (through web links and/or Advising Worksheets appropriate to their major) to use in order to create their Planner. To complete the Planner students must include the courses taken as well as those they plan to take in their academic career. In addition to coursework, students should include any other experiences relevant to their own professional development (e.g., volunteer opportunities, research involvement, study abroad, or internships). Use of the Planner is certainly varied (similar to use of the Advising Syllabus). Advisors encourage students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their academic and co-curricular progress with these planners. Students also should include on the Planner when they might begin to search for and apply to jobs, graduate programs, etc.

OUTCOMES / LESSONS LEARNED

Formal investigations of these tools have not been conducted; however, anecdotal evidence suggests students and faculty have found these tools beneficial. For example, when reflecting on The Planner, one student commented in their course evaluation [the Planner] "is a great opportunity to identify, goals and get a really actionable plan in place to achieve it." Students appear to benefit from these tools most when students are provided ample time to understand, create, and appropriately adjust the specific mechanisms of both tools. These tools are ideal when engaged as iterative experiences. Specifically, advisors first provide appropriate scaffolding to advisees by introducing these tools. Additionally, the metacognitive nature of both tools allows students to move beyond knowing and understanding their academic requirements to analyzing, evaluating, and creating their plan to meet such requirements. In other words, the

tools reflect a change from the bottom, or lower level, Bloom's taxonomy skills to the top, or higher level, skills. The level of specific metacognitive guidance each advisor provides advisees is also completely variable as neither of these tools are mandatory. Both tools simply provide a metacognitive lens for both advisors and students to view the advising process.

REFERENCES

- Campbell, S.M., & Nutt C.L. (2008). Academic advising in the new global century: Supporting student engagement and learning outcomes achievement. *Peer Review, 10*, 4-7.
- Freeman, L.C. (2008). Establishing effective advising practices to influence student learning and success. *Peer Review, 10*, 12-14.
- Sullivan-Vance, K. (2008). Reenvisioning and revitalizing academic advising at Western Oregon University. *Peer Review, 10*, 15-17.
- Wilcoxson, L., & Wynder, M. (2010). The relationship between choice of major and career, experience of university and attrition. *Australian Journal of Education, 54*, 175-189.

APPENDIX A



Undergraduate Advising Syllabus

Academic Advising Center
568 Garden Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63119

<http://www.webster.edu/advising/>
<http://www.facebook.com/WebsterAdvising>

Advising Center Contact Information	Phone: 314-968-6972 or 1-800-982-3847 Fax: 314-968-7166 Email: advising@webster.edu
Advising Center Hours	Monday – Thursday: 8:30AM - 5:30PM Friday: 8:30AM - 4:30PM
Advisor	Name: Phone: Email:
Advisor Hours	By Appointment. Please call 314-968-6972.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Undergraduate Catalog (http://www.webster.edu/catalog/current/undergraduate-catalog) ❖ Academic Advising Online Resources (http://www.webster.edu/advising/) ❖ Online Course Schedule (http://www.webster.edu/academics/course-schedules.html) ❖ Connections (http://connections.webster.edu) ❖ Academic Calendar (http://www.webster.edu/academics/academic-calendar/)
Academic Advising Description	<p>Academic advising is key for success as an undergraduate student. Academic advisors assist in guiding you through your degree program and can answer questions about the requirements of your major, Global Citizenship/general education and electives. Your academic advisor can also help you select classes appropriate for your interests and abilities as well as provide information regarding adding a minor and/or certificate to your degree. In addition, your advisor can assist you in making connections with other support offices throughout the University.</p> <p>You are required to connect with your advisor prior to enrollment before each semester in order to receive clearance for registration. Students who do not receive clearance cannot register themselves online.</p>
Learning Outcomes	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the University’s advising structure • Identify degree configuration and how each part contributes to the degree (i.e. major, global citizenship requirements, electives) • Describe areas of study at the University that support one’s interests and professional goals • Identify where to locate University policy and procedure information

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the available academic tools and create an appropriate schedule for each semester prior to contacting her/his advisor. • Make use of University support resources (i.e. Academic Resource Center, Career Services, Departmental Internship Coordinators, etc.)
Advisor Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist you in academic planning and course selection • Understand University policies and procedures • Understand general education and departmental requirements • Understand the registration and the drop/add processes • Understand withdrawal procedures and ramifications • Communicate these policies and procedures to you • Be accessible via phone, email and for scheduled appointments • Provide a safe environment in which to discuss your questions, concerns, thoughts and academic plans
Advisee Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular appointments with your academic advisor each semester • Arrive on time and prepared for advising appointments • Be familiar with and understand your degree audit and catalog requirements • Keep apprised of current graduation and program requirements • Review the academic calendar and familiarize yourself with important deadlines such as dropping and withdrawing • Understand how to use the Online Course Schedule • Understand how to use and access your “Student Academic Services” within your Connections account – you will be able to register yourself online after meeting with or contacting your advisor to gain clearance prior to each semester. • Regularly check your Webster email • Accept responsibility for your decisions and outcomes of these decisions
Scheduling an Advising Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To schedule an appointment, call the Advising Center at 314-968-6972 or 1-800-982-3847. ❖ Advising appointments are limited to one hour in length although many appointments may require less time. ❖ Please call the Advising Center if you need to reschedule or cancel an appointment or if you are running late. ❖ Be courteous; arrive on time. ❖ Late arrivals may be required to reschedule.
Preparing for an Advising Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Review degree requirements indicated in the degree audit ❖ Review online course schedule, plan out a schedule and check for day/time conflicts and pre-requisites requirements ❖ Have alternatives in mind in case a course is closed ❖ Be prepared with questions or topics to discuss
Additional Resources	<p>Academic Resource Center: http://www.webster.edu/academic-resource-center/, 314-246-7620</p> <p>Career Planning & Development Center: http://www.webster.edu/career-services/, 314-968-6982, careern@webster.edu</p> <p>Study Abroad Office: http://www.webster.edu/study-abroad/, 314-968-6988, worldview@webster.edu</p> <p>Counseling & Life Development: http://www.webster.edu/student-counseling/, 314-968-7030, counselingld@webster.edu</p>

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Undergraduate Timeline

Academic Advising Center

568 Garden Avenue

St. Louis, MO 63119

<http://www.webster.edu/advising/>

<https://www.facebook.com/WebsterAdvising>

**Freshmen
(0-29 credit hours):**

- Meet with your advisor to discuss your degree options, requirements and clarify any policy/procedure questions
- Register for courses in a variety of subject areas
- Begin Global Citizenship/general education and electives
- Begin intro level courses for your major or potential major
- Get to know faculty, professional staff and administrators and begin building relationships
- Learn about resources that are available on campus such as the Academic Resource Center and the Library
- Participate in campus activities and join clubs which interest you personally and professionally
- Begin a career/major assessment; Connect with Career Services
- Begin investigating study abroad options
- _____
- _____
- _____

**Sophomores
(30-59 credit hours):**

- Begin researching internship opportunities
- Consider adding a minor or certificate to your program to complement your major and enhance your knowledge and skills base
- Undecided Students: Narrow your major possibilities
- Continue taking Global Citizenship/general education, elective and major classes
- Schedule an appointment with the Career Services Office
- Continue investigating study abroad options, make plans and note deadlines
 - *Accounting majors: Study abroad in your sophomore year or the in the summer before/after your junior year.*
- Consider professional organizations associated with your major
- _____
- _____
- _____

<p>Juniors (60-89 credit hours):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Apply for/complete an appropriate internship and/or participate in volunteer opportunities to gain professional experience ○ Continue taking Global Citizenship/general education, elective and major classes ○ Consider your long term career goals and graduate school options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with Career Services again to make sure you are on track ○ Research graduate school admissions requirements ○ Attend the Fall Career and Internship Fair and other Career Services sponsored workshops ○ Study abroad at one of Webster’s international campuses ○ Review your program plan with your advisor ○ Know when you need to meet milestones such as portfolio review, senior seminar, etc. ○ _____ ○ _____ ○ _____
<p>Seniors (90+ credit hours):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete an internship ○ Complete Global Citizenship/general education, elective and major classes ○ Complete Keystone Seminar (if applicable) ○ Plan out your job search ○ Prepare to take graduate school entrance exams (GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, etc.) ○ Contemplate letters of recommendation for graduate school/employment ○ Refine your working resume/cover letter ○ Complete graduate school applications ○ Submit Petition to Graduate form at the beginning of your final semester ○ Complete <i>Steps to Graduation</i> found on the Commencement website ○ _____ ○ _____ ○ _____

Appendix B: Planner Template

PLANNER template

Option: _____

Advisor: _____

Year 1	Fall	Cr	Spring	Cr	Winter/SummerI/SummerII	Cr
Benchmark to be met?						
	Total					
Year 2	Fall	Cr	Spring	Cr	Winter/SummerI/SummerII	Cr
Benchmark to be met? CORE Audit?						
	Total					
Year 3	Fall	Cr	Spring	Cr	Winter/SummerI/SummerII	Cr
Benchmark to be met? Senior Audit?						
	Total					
Year 4	Fall	Cr	Spring	Cr	Winter/SummerI/SummerII	Cr
Benchmark to be met? Graduation!						

	Total				
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Have you: a) planned study abroad? b) Considered a double major? c) gotten an internship? d) done research work? E) other enrichment?

Note: Template originally designed by Eric Goedereis, Ph.D. Webster University