

STUDENT SATISFACTION THROUGH ACADEMIC ADVISING: HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR?

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ABSTRACT

The academic advising involves helping students to understand the paths that could be taken so that students can draw their own roadmaps to achieve their goals and monitor their own progress. Moreover, the academic advising has become an integral part of the learning culture in the university. As we know, life in the university can be a very challengeable experience especially for the new students. Hence, the academic advisors can ease the students' transition from school life to the university life by providing them with useful information about knowledge and services as well as guidance for students throughout their entire education experiences. Furthermore, the academic advising services will enhance students' greater satisfaction with their academic experience, better self-understanding and a sense of success in the achievement of personal and academic goals. In view of this, this survey was carried out to determine the style of advising used by the current academic advisor, the students' preferred advising style, and their satisfaction with academic advising. The survey was based on responses gathered from 111 undergraduates from the School of Engineering, UiTM Pulau Pinang. The Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) by Winston and Sandor (2002) was used to assess the advising method in UiTM Pulau Pinang. The results showed that 83.8% students identified their current academic advisor as using a developmental advising style and 72.1% respondents preferred developmental advising. Meanwhile, 97.3% students were satisfied with the academic advising that they received in UiTM Pulau Pinang. In addition, the students who had created a positive relationship with their assigned academic advisor reported having more satisfaction with their education experience and positively developed as a student.

Keywords: Academic advising; advisor; developmental; prescriptive; Academic Advising Inventory (AAI).

1. INTRODUCTION

The academic advising is considered one of the means for promoting intellectual, personal, and social development of the students. In addition, the academic advising involves tasks

where academic advisors play an important role in ensuring the needs of students who experience difficulties in adjustment to university life. King and Kerr (2005) noted that 'academic advising is a key factor in challenging and supporting students in making a successful transition in the university, feeling a part of self-belonging to their institutions, and achieving their educational goals'(pp.330).

The purpose of this study was to determine:

- i. The students' perception of their current advisor's academic advising style (prescriptive or developmental).
- ii. The preferred advisor's academic advising style (prescriptive or developmental).
- iii. The students' level of satisfaction with academic advising.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Academic Advising

Daller (1997), Braxton and McClendon (2001), Myers and Dyer (2005) stated that the academic advising is intended to enhance students' academic and social integration within the university community. Furthermore, the benefits of effective academic advising include improving student's retention, creating positive learning environments, enhancing student's motivation to complete programs on time, and improved student successes (Frost, 1991; Moses, 2001; Mastrodicasa, 2001; Templeton, Skaggs, & Johnson, 2002).

2.2 Developmental Advising

Developmental Advising is an academic advising model which intends to focus on a student-centred approach toward developing a relationship between students and academic advisors. Advisors help student to realize their goals and aid in planning, but final decisions are up to the students (Academic Advising Glossary). Jordan (2000) stated that developmental advisors emphasize positive strengths, abilities and skills of students as well as by listening to what students say.

2.3 Prescriptive Advising

Prescriptive Advising is an academic advising model which intends to provide as much information as possible so that the students are well informed about courses and registration procedures. This type of advising is linear and does not allow much input from the students (Academic Advising Glossary). Jordan (2000) noted that prescriptive advising is answering only specific questions and not taking individual development into consideration. Moreover, prescriptive advisors are to be less effective in fostering students' academic and social integration within the university community.

2.4 Academic Advisor

A good advisor knows when to be prescriptive and when to use developmental techniques in advising the students. Good advising balances the best of both prescriptive and developmental

advising. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) viewed that advising as a way to connect students to the campus and help them feel that someone is looking out for them.

2.5 Student Satisfaction with Academic Advising

Low (2000) and Light (2001) indicated that students' satisfaction with academic advising is an important part of a successful university experience. Conversely, if students are dissatisfied with advising, students are most likely to disregard their academic advisors.

2.6 Academic Advising and Success in Engineering

The retention of engineering student is important because every semester the Engineering Faculty will have students who would be expelled from the university due to their CGPA which is below 2.00. Seminars, talks and workshops have been carried out to motivate and guide the students. However, these curriculum activities do not have a continuous lasting effect on the students. Metzner (1989) demonstrated that academic advising has an indirect impact on students' retention by means of increased student satisfaction and higher grades. Moreover, (Hunter & White, 2004) stated that academic advising is an important element of a student's overall experience within the engineering faculties.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample

The sample for this study was selected from the two faculties at UiTM Pulau Pinang consists of a convenient population of 111 students. The breakdown according to the respective faculties is as follows: Faculty of Electrical Engineering (N = 59) and Faculty of Civil Engineering (N = 52).

3.2 Instrument

The Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) by Winston and Sandor (2002) is a 60-item questionnaire designed to have prescriptive and developmental advising and is divided into four major categories. Part I assessed the students' perception of their current academic advising using 11 paired items. Part II consisted 27 items which measures the frequency of specific advising behaviours. Part III contained five items (on a 4-point Likert-type scale) which were summed to measure students' satisfaction with academic advising. Part IV collected selected demographic information from the students. Part V consisted of the same 11 items and format as in Part I, except that students were instructed to rate their preferred advising style. Part V was summed and interpreted in the same manner as Part I.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Reliability analysis based on Cronbach's alpha value was used to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha value with equal or more than 0.7 is acceptable. Thus, Table 1 shows the items used in the study were considered reliable.

Table 1: Reliability analysis results

Categories	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Part I, Part II, Part III, Part IV and Part V	60	0.863

As shown in Table 2, 83.78% of students perceived the advising styles used by their current advisor as developmental advising. Respondents indicated that the majority of academic advising happening in UiTM Pulau Pinang was the developmental advising.

Table 2: Academic advising style of current advisor as perceived by the students

Current Advisor's Style	N	%	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.
Prescriptive	18	16.21	38.39	5.20	23	43
Developmental	93	83.78	54.62	5.47	45	67

Students expressed a strong preference for developmental advising as shown in Table 3. About 72.07% of students indicated their preferred advisor would use the developmental advising style. These students wanted more help with basic academic skills such as time management and study skills.

Table 3: Preferred academic advising style as perceived by the students

Preferred Advisor's Style	N	%	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min.	Max.
Prescriptive	31	27.93	34.84	8.02	19	44
Developmental	80	72.07	54.14	6.73	45	70

As shown in Table 4, the largest group of students (66.67%) had a developmental advisor and held developmental advising as their preferred styles. Approximately 10.81% of students had a prescriptive advisor and held prescriptive advising as their preferred style. The mean level of students' satisfaction with advising was 14.60 (SD = 2.42). Moreover, the student who had a developmental advisor and held developmental advising as their preferred style had a significantly higher level of satisfaction than students with a prescriptive advisor who held developmental advising as their preferred style.

Table 4: Current advisor's academic advising style, student's preferred advising style, and level of satisfaction with advising

Current Advisor's Style	Preferred Advisor's Style	N	%	Level Of Satisfaction	
				Std.Dev.	Mean
Developmental	Developmental	74	66.67	2.42	14.60

As shown in Table 5, 97.3% of the students were satisfied with the academic advising that they had received in UiTM Pulau Pinang. The low scores of (5 – 9) indicates dissatisfaction with the overall advising received and the high scores of (10 – 20) indicates satisfaction with

advising. In addition, the majority of respondents rate their advisors as statistically significant. These results indicate that students desire a developmental advisor. Furthermore, this developmental advising allows the students to perceive their relationship with their advisor as being more than information on course selection and scheduling.

Table 5: Level of satisfaction with advising

Possible Scores	Frequencies	%
7	2	1.8
9	1	0.9
10	6	5.4
11	2	1.8
12	7	6.3
13	7	6.3
14	15	13.5
15	42	37.8
16	13	11.7
17	5	4.5
18	5	4.5
19	2	1.8
20	4	3.6

5. CONCLUSION

Nearly 84% of the students perceived their current academic advisor as being a developmental advisor. This indicates that these students perceived their relationship with their advisor as being more than someone who is just involved in course scheduling. Developmental advisor develops personal relationships with students and integrates academic, career, and personal goals into the advising process (Jordan, 2000).

Approximately one-sixth (16.21%) of students perceived their current academic advisor as being prescriptive advisors. Braxton and McClendon (2001), Myers and Dyer (2005) noted that students with prescriptive advisors may not have the same opportunities to become integrated into the academic and social communities of the university as the students with developmental advisors.

Nearly 67% of students indicated that their preferred academic advisors would be a developmental advisor. This indicates that students want to feel that someone is looking out

for them. Furthermore, the students were satisfied with the academic advising that they had received in UiTM Pulau Pinang.

The results of this study indicated that increasing the percentage of developmental advisors may lead to a higher level of students' satisfaction with academic advising.

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