

About five years ago, I discovered through my cousin that academic advising exists as a vocation at the post-secondary level. During my own undergraduate experience, overworked faculty advisors constituted the only advising presence on campus without a dedicated center. Although I was always passionate about academic planning as a student, I witnessed as many of my friends floundered without this, I would argue, critically-necessary support. I helped many of these friends with their planning processes and always derived a lot of joy from doing so, so when I became acquainted with the field, I knew it would be a perfect fit for me.

My adherence to a proactive advising model stems from witnessing my friends' struggles as I believe strongly in the effectiveness of deliberate, early intervention; personalized strategies and planning; and closely monitoring and collaborating with students from the beginning of their academic journey to the end of it. This advising model assists with students' academic, personal, and professional growth, as well as supports both retention and graduation rates and is proven to achieve best results with at-risk students. Based on and in addition to my support of proactive advising interventions and strategies, I am committed to the following objectives and principles in relation to students, to colleagues, and to my own career:

Building relationships: As much as the *conceptual* and *informational* academic advising competencies are critically important, I would consider the *relational* component most predicative of successful advising relationships. The importance of emphasizing social-emotional competency development and cultivating strong interpersonal relationships with students cannot be understated because even if an advisor has a perfect understanding of theoretical frameworks and university policies, success with students will inevitably be undercut if there is not a mutual investment in the relationships.

Commitment to collaboration: Collaboration with students is the primary focus, but advising colleague collaboration as an ethical and professional obligation provides advisors with invaluable resources. In addition to collaboration with students and advising colleagues, I believe that no department within a university should work in isolation, especially in relation to student development and success. "It takes a village" to ensure students receive the best possible education and overall experience within their post-secondary institutions. Academic advisors should seek to actively develop relationships with faculty, career development services, accessibility services, student counseling centers, etc. to ensure successful direct collaboration initiatives and referrals.

Continued professional development: Education and professional development are among my chief passions in life, and I can guarantee there will never be a point in time when I believe that there is nothing left for me to learn. Professional development should always be considered *ongoing* because higher education lives and breathes. There will always be new policies, new resources and supports for our students, and more to learn about the communities we serve.

Cultivating student autonomy: My cousin who works as an academic advisor once told me the following when reflecting on working with new students: "You have to be the time management and organization your students are not yet ready to be for themselves." She also paired this by speaking to how critical it is to be proactive when helping them to become more autonomous and take control of their academic journey. Through collaborating on academic plans based on and in

addition to establishing goals, developing action, recognizing challenges, and identifying student abilities, strengths, and values, I view the cultivation of student autonomy as a chief objective.

Discovering passions: For me, undergrad was such an exciting time because it allowed me to discover my passions. I started as a pre-law track political science major and ended up as a dual communications and English creative writing major all before continuing on to graduate school first in English literature and then in education. This experience has also acquainted me with the idea that finding one's passion is not always a direct or easy path. It requires some guess and check, and students should be encouraged, not shamed, when taking necessary, transformative detours.

Embracing diversity: I wholeheartedly support initiatives that advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). After spending four and a half years teaching and interacting with students, as well as being a student myself, at the University of Ottawa, which has the distinction of being the largest bilingual institution in North America, I have engaged with students in individual and group contexts from different backgrounds, cultures, and corners of the world. Through academic advising, I welcome opportunities to expand my experience interacting with diverse populations and meet any present shortcomings by treating culture awareness and knowledge as ongoing professional development.

Making the unknown, known: In my own experience, I found many of my friends had very "abstract" ideas of what their academic journeys actually entailed. I think it is especially critical to provide information and experiences to students that *illuminate* their path in both the short and the long-term. This is important when students are undecided and trying to conceptualize different paths, as well as when they think they have found a concentration that suits their goals and passions. I support opportunities, such as information interviews / meetings, internships, study abroad, and academic program events, as essential to making the unknown, known.