

# NACADA Statement of Core Values of Academic Advising

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The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) is an organization of professional advisors, faculty members, administrators, students, and others from a variety of settings who do academic advising or otherwise work to promote quality academic advising on college and university campuses. As members of this organization or of the profession, or as others who advise or provide related programs and services to students, we must recognize our responsibility not only to our students and our institutions but also to our society, our colleagues, and ourselves.

Although not all who do academic advising are professional advisors, anyone carrying out advising functions should be expected to perform in a professional manner. The core values discussed here provide a framework advisors can measure their performance against.

In no way does this statement try to dictate that all academic advising be done in precisely the same way or that there is only one correct advising philosophy or model. Instead these values are reference points for professionals to use. Furthermore, the core values do not carry equal weight. Advisors will find some core values more important than others, depending upon their own philosophies and those of their colleges or universities.

## The Power of Academic Advising

Few experiences in students' postsecondary careers have as much potential for influencing development as academic advising does.

Through regular contact with students—whether face-to-face, through the mail, on the telephone, or through computer-mediated systems—advisors gain meaningful insights into students' academic, social, and personal experiences and needs. Advisors use these insights to help students feel part of the academic community, develop sound academic and career goals, and ultimately be successful learners.

Because of the nature of academic advising, advisors often develop a broad vision of the institution. Advisors can therefore play an important interpretive role with administrators, faculty members, and staff, helping them further understand students' academic and personal development needs. Advisors can teach others to identify students who, with additional attention from aca-

ademic support staff, can succeed academically and personally.

Students place a great deal of trust in their advisors. That trust warrants quality programs and services. Indeed, student expectations of academic advising are honored through our core values.

## Beliefs About Students

Like other educators, academic advisors acknowledge the importance, dignity, potential, and unique nature of each individual served within the academic setting. Our work is guided by our belief that:

- students can be responsible for their own behavior;
- students can be successful as a result of their individual goals and efforts;
- students have a desire to learn;
- learning needs vary according to individual skills, goals, and experiences; and
- students hold their own beliefs and opinions.

## The Importance of Core Values

Out of these beliefs grow our core values. Regardless of our professional preparation and experience in the field of academic advising, we are ultimately guided by what we perceive as important, what we value, and what we believe about those we serve—primarily students but also others in the institutions we work in and even the institutions themselves.

We recognize the complex nature of academic advising, the wide variety of settings and tasks advisors are responsible for, and the diverse backgrounds and experiences of advisors. Yet although values and beliefs are by their very nature individual, many are subscribed to by those who advise students. Through this Statement of Core Values we communicate to others what they can expect from us. These core values may be used to validate our conduct in our diverse roles and our relationships within the academic community.

## Core Values

Students deserve dependable, accurate, respectful, honest, friendly, and professional service. To serve students well, academic advisors understand that they are responsible to many constituents

who comprise our academic communities. This is the foundation the following core values arise from.

**Advisors are responsible to the students and individuals they serve.** All who advise must cooperate to deliver quality programs and services to students. These include, but are not limited to, giving accurate and timely information, maintaining regular office hours, and keeping appointments.

Advisors help students develop a perception of themselves and their relationship to the future. Advisors introduce students in a nurturing way to the world they are entering—teaching them to value the learning process, put the college experience into perspective, become more responsible, set priorities, evaluate sequences of events, and be honest with themselves.

Advisors encourage self-reliance by helping students make informed and responsible decisions; set realistic goals; and develop thinking, learning, and life-management skills to meet present and future needs. Advisors work with students to help them accomplish the goals and objectives they have established for themselves. Advisors encourage students to be responsible for their own success and progress. They respect students' rights to their own beliefs and opinions but are not dictated to by them.

Advisors work to modify barriers to student progress; to identify burdensome, ineffective, and inefficient policies and procedures; and to effect change. When the needs of students and the institution are in conflict, advisors seek a resolution that is in the best interest of both. Advisors inform students about appropriate grievance procedures in cases where students find the resolution unsatisfactory.

Advisors recognize the changing nature of the college and university environment and of the student body. They support students in appropriate ways (e.g., advocating at the administrative level for recognition of these changes; offering varied office hours; and acknowledging the needs of all students and the pressures on them to juggle study with work, family, and other interpersonal demands).

Advisors are knowledgeable about and sensitive to federal, state, and institutional policies and procedures, especially those governing such matters as sexual harassment; relationships with students; privacy of student information; and equal access, treatment, and opportunity.

Advisors respect the rights of students to have information about themselves kept confidential. Advisors share information with others about students and their programs only when both advisor and student believe that information is relevant and will result in increased information or assistance, assessment, and provision of appropriate services to the student.

Advisors gain access to and use computerized information about students only when that information is relevant to the advising they are doing. Advisors enter or change information on student records only when authorized to do so.

Advisors document advising contacts adequately to aid subsequent advising interactions.

**Advisors are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process.** Effective advising requires a broad-based, holistic approach to working with students. Academic advisors develop crucial ties with others who assist students in such diverse areas as admissions, orientation, financial aid, housing, health services, athletics, course selection, satisfaction of academic requirements, special physical and educational needs (e.g., disabilities, study skills, psychological counseling), foreign study, career development, cocurricular programs, and graduation clearance.

Advisors are facilitators and mediators. Responsible academic advisors recognize their limitations and use their specialized knowledge effectively.

To make connections between academic advising and other aspects of students' lives, advisors seek out resources provided by others. Referrals to these resources provide students with further assessments of their needs and access to appropriate programs and services. With others, advisors are responsible for helping students integrate the information they are confronted with and for helping students make well-informed academic decisions.

If peer advisors are used, the supervising advisor will closely monitor the peer advisor regarding adherence to appropriate policies and practices.

**Advisors are responsible to the college or university in which they work.** Advisors respect the opinions of their colleagues; remain neutral when students present them with comments, questions, or opinions about other faculty or staff; and are nonjudgmental about academic programs.

Advisors increase their collective professional strength by sharing their philosophies and techniques with colleagues.

Advisors keep administrators who are not involved directly in the advising process informed and aware of the importance of academic advising in students' lives and of the need for administrative support of advising and related activities.

Advisors abide by the specific policies, procedures, and values of the department and institution they work for. Where injustices occur and might interfere with student learning, advisors advocate for change on behalf of students with the institution's administration, faculty, and staff.

**Advisors are responsible to higher education generally.** Academic advisors honor (and are protected by) the concept of academic freedom. In this spirit, advisors hold a variety of points of view. Academic advisors are free to base their work with students on the most appropriate and optimal theories of college student development and models of delivery for academic advising programs and services.

Advisors accept that one of the goals of education is to introduce students to the world of ideas. One goal of academic advising is to establish a partnership between students and advisors to guide students through academic programs so they can attain the knowledge offered by faculty.

Academic advisors believe that it is ultimately the responsibility of students to apply what they learn to everyday situations. Advisors help students in understanding this process.

Advisors advocate for students' educational achievement at the highest attainable standard and support student goals as well as the educational mission of the institution.

Advisors advocate the creation or strengthening of programs and services that are compatible with students' academic needs.

**Advisors are responsible to the community (including the local community, the state, and the region) in which the institution is located.** Academic advisors interpret the institution's mission, standards, goals, and values to its community, including the public and private schools that the institution draws its student body from. Likewise, advisors understand their student body and regularly inform the schools their students from come about appropriate preparation so that students can perform successfully in higher education.

Advisors are sensitive to the values and mores of the surrounding community, sharing these with and interpreting them to students. Advisors are aware of community programs and services and may become models for students by participating in community activities themselves.

**Advisors are responsible to their professional role as advisors and to themselves personally.** To keep advising skills honed and interest high, advisors are encouraged to seek opportunities for professional development through classes, workshops, conferences, reading, consultation with others, and interaction in formal groups with other advisors (e.g., professional organizations such as NACADA).

Advisors understand the demands on themselves that emerge from the service nature of the work they do. Advisors develop skills for taking care of themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They learn how to detach themselves from students' problems while maintaining a keen listening ear and providing sensitive responses. They establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. They need to be nurtured by others within the profession, and they need to nurture their colleagues. They seek support for themselves inside and outside the institution.

Academic advising lends itself well to research. Advisors may engage in research related to advising and are encouraged to engage in research related to their own particular training and disciplinary backgrounds. Each research agenda must honor the institution's safeguards for privacy and humane treatment of subjects.

Note: The intention behind this Statement of Core Values is to provide the guidance many academic advisors have sought. This statement should be reviewed periodically, adding relevant material and rewording existing language to bring the statement in line with current professional practices and thinking. NACADA encourages institutions to adopt this Statement of Core Values, to embrace its principles, and to support the work of those who do academic advising.

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