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ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From the Office of the Associate Dean

ADVISING OUR STUDENTS

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The success of our students is based upon time and sacrifice of our staff and faculty towards ensuring that students' needs are addressed. These students are our customers, and we as members of staff and faculty form the largest part of their stakeholders. Each year, Academic Programs conducts a survey of all our senior students to collect their views about their entire academic life while on campus. Their views serve as the basis for this article.

According to the survey, more than 50% of the students indicated some concern with advising. The same survey revealed the prominent role being played by academic advisors was helping students select their majors. Additionally, since more than 70% of the students indicated that they had two or more advisors, it is important that we present the complexities of advising and ways to improve it in order to help students in the future.

ADVISING

Most of our students enroll at the campus directly from high school. Furthermore, according to the survey, we found that more than 70% of our students register as freshmen at the age of 20 or below. This is a period of time that students need support and advice from their teachers more than any time in their life as they confront challenges associated with adulthood. Many students who responded to the survey indicated that some of their most challenging moments at the campus were adjusting to the college environment, and developing social and interpersonal skills.

TIPS ON GOOD ADVISING

According to the survey, students who reported concerns with advising were those who met their advisors once a semester or never. Conversely, those who reported meeting their advisors three times or more a semester found that their entire stay at the college was most rewarding. Such academic advisors were able to advise the students on selecting their majors based on their strengths and weaknesses. As students struggle to fit themselves within the academic environment, we as teachers need to help them nurture their dreams. This is especially important given that students look upon us as guardians and counselors. Similar responsibilities are also bestowed on us by their parents.

WHO IS A GOOD ADVISOR?

Students want to be treated as human beings, not as mere numbers. A positive attitude of the advisor toward the advisee is a powerful tool for motivation. Students who are motivated are encouraged to work harder and achieve more. On the other hand a negative attitude toward your advisee breeds poor relationships between the professor and the students. This often results in students feeling inadequate and therefore becoming discouraged to work hard and achieve more. A good advisor should take his/her time with the advisee, call him/her by name, know the attitudes, abilities, ambitions, and if possible, strive to know his/her family background. All of these are important because these elements may affect student performance in one way or another. The more conversant an advisor is with the student's complex world, the easier it is to give valuable direction to your student.

WHAT DO GOOD ADVISORS DO?

According to the student survey, excellent advisors were described as doing the following:

a) Provide information about graduate studies for those interested in further studies, and other career opportunities.

b) Provide information on financial aid and scholarships.

c) Provide good advice on courses that are relevant and yet broad enough to cover the student's major interests.

d) Encourage students to work hard and show interest in student's work and performance.

e) Help students to develop their social and interpersonal skills by encouraging team in group participation.

f) Provide research opportunities to enable students to gain first hand experiences.

g) Listen to students' concerns, and give them time to tell their story. Seek students' opinions and explain to them why you disagree with their line of thought. This way you gain students' trust as they begin to view you as supportive, friendly and concerned with their future.

h) Advisors must be knowledgeable not only in their areas of expertise, but also across the board, including good knowledge of university and college policies.

Student-Centered Lecturing From "The Teaching Professor", by Alan S. Loxterman, University of Richmond

For courses where exposition of texts is a priority, I often assign teams of three students to begin a class by lecturing. Students first must decide among them-selves how best to achieve coverage of the assigned reading, roughly dividing responsibilities for beginning, middle, and end. They negotiate about how they will accomplish this by phone or, more frequently, e-mail. From their section of the text, students select what they regard to be the major point. They then formulate a question about their section that they each put on the board before class starts. That way, everyone can see how much overlapping or inter-connection there may be between three distinctive points in the total reading assignment. Class begins with students trying to get the class to answer their questions, giving their own answers, and explaining why they thought the questions were significant in terms of the assigned reading as a whole.

As for evaluation, I let students know in writing that 25 percent of their final grade will be based on individual performance in "student-led discussion." (I avoid calling it lecturing to forestall complaints that I am having students "do my job.") I also include a description of the grading criteria that cover how they approach the material (thoughtful questions evoking answers that are neither self-evident nor obscurely personal in interpretation) and both quality and quantity of the class response generated by each question. This way even a student who is verbally ineffective (and I do sit in the last row, prompting clarification from those I cannot hear or understand) can still receive credit for the class response generated by the question written on the board.

How often I use this format depends on how well a specific group of students interacts in discussion and on how much and what sort of material I wish to cover. For an average class size of around 25, using teams of three students will enable you to include the entire class at least once while leaving open additional class periods to use for study questions and response papers written out by everyone prior to a class, or for in-class summaries of concepts and materials already discussed.

Beginning a class with certain students being responsible for conducting a brief lecture-discussion of their own does have advantages. It allows the class to see what their peers consider to be significant in the text before a teacher tells them. It also enables me to find out immediately what gaps need to be filled in or what misunder-standings need to be cleared up. I can either address the class directly myself after the students have finished or handle problems of communi-cation more indirectly by raising questions of my own during the student-led discussion. I also copy down my student-lecturers' questions and take notes on the class's answers for testing purposes later. Including material from the student lecture-discussion exchanges on the examinations sends a message that class discussion does matter. Examination questions and grades will be derived not only from materials that an authority figure has designated but also from ideas that students themselves are regularly generating about those materials.

ACES Seniors - Where Do They Go?

A total of 393 students graduated with undergraduate degrees from the U of I and ACES in January or May 1998. Assistant Dean Charles Olson conducted a follow-up study of the seniors, collecting placement information at 90 days after commencement. For this year's group, 41% were employed and 20% were in graduate or professional school. Another 25% did not respond to the survey, and 5% were unavailable for employment. For the 160 who were employed, the average salary was $28,800.

ACES Freshmen - What Are They Like?

Did you ever wonder what our freshmen look like in terms of demographic information? The following data are gleaned from new student questionnaires and enrollment information in the College of ACES.

Average ACT Composite - 25.4.

25% of the class has ACT Composite of 28 or higher.

ACES freshmen scored highest on Reading (25.6) and lowest on English (24.8) subtests.

Average High School Percentile Rank in Class -
78th %ile.

23% were in the top 10% of their graduating class.

59.1% of the freshman class is female and 40.9% male.

Students' hometown (self-selected among five categories:
Urban (over 100,000) - 13.5%
Urban (50,000 - 100,000) - 12.6%
Urban (10,000 - 50,000) - 36.9%
Town (less than 10,000) - 15.4%
Farm/Rural - 21.6%

Teaching - The Application of Basic Psychology

Every introductory psychology course addresses the basic phenomenon of stimulus and response. For every response, there is a stimulus. Most of us learned that concept in reading about rats running through a maze, or dogs salivating when they heard a bell ring.
As crass as it may sound, that same concept applies to teaching. Students respond to the various stimuli that are provided to them. For example, the students will tell you that their response to the stimulus provided by "boring" teachers is sleep, or skipping class altogether. Their response to an excellent lecture is attentiveness, asking questions, and hopefully better grades. In teaching, the focus should be on the activity — what does the stimulus (the teacher) DO to influence a positive response? Intensify the RIGHT KIND of instruction, and increased learning (the response) will occur.
Taken from a presentation by Richard L. Andrews, Dean of the College of Education University of Missouri-Columbia, at the 1997 North Central Teaching Workshop.

Inspiring Greatness in Students

Adapted from article by Michael W. Firmin, Cedarville College in "The Teaching Professor"

Principle One: Believe in Them

Believing in students involves sizing up their abilities and interests and assessing how far these could take them in the future if they are developed, honed, and disciplined. Having someone that they respect express confidence in what they could do in time provides the impetus for them to stretch themselves toward new goals of personal excellence.

Principle Two: Give Them Early Chances

All great people were once young and immature, made mistakes, and embarrassed their mentors. But the greatness eventually achieved made the clumsiness along the way worth the effort of getting there.

Principle Three: View Them Through the Lens of Time

I try to challenge students with a sense of "destiny." The student may not ever achieve what I envision --and whether or not the student ever does is not important. But what I do want to do is to encourage students not to sell themselves short of their destinies. I want them to think in terms of all they can do and be.

Principle Four: Be Genuine with Them
Students know. They can tell if you are being fakey or just trying out some sort of motivational spin. Believing in students, giving them chances, and viewing them through the lens of time needs to be part of who I am as a person. It is an expression of my being— not simply an exercise or experiment I am trying on students. Inspiring students to greatness has to be something that you genuinely and deeply believe in as a person.
Principle Five: Take Time During Teachable Moments
Inspiring greatness takes time. It takes a lot of time. Students need me at inconvenient times. I am forced to prioritize these demands on my time and forced to make the choices on the spot without the luxury of time to think and analyze.
Principle Six: You Cannot Inspire Everyone to Greatness
Not all my students are destined to be great. This is not to say that all students do not have tremendous future potentials. They do. But not all will become great. In my own experience, there is no real science to it. If there is a remote pattern, however, I would say that in all cases a certain "goodness of fit" occurs between me and the student. So inspire students to greatness! You may not be able to do it for all; but the ones for whom you do it will be worth investing your life in higher education. It has been for me, and I have only been at it for a decade.

Evaluating Faculty

Teaching and service by professors should be evaluated with the same standards that are used to judge the quality of research, says a report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching that was summarized in the 9/5/97 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education.
The report counters the conventional wisdom in academe that says research has to be evaluated by a yardstick different from those of teaching and service. Instead, the report maintains that the different types of faculty work have much in common and must be held to the same standards if teaching and service are ever to gain as much respect as research in hiring-and-promotion decisions.
The report identified the policies for evaluation of teaching, research and service, and the extent to which each is used in faculty evaluations.

	Currently in general use	Not in general use but under consideration	Not in general use and not under consideration at this time
TEACHING			
Systematic student evaluations of classroom teaching	98%	2%	0%
Self-evaluation or personal statement	82	12	5
Peer review of syllabi, examinations, and other teaching materials	62	29	8
Peer review of classroom teaching	58	33	9
Evidence of continuing student interest (i.e. majors, course enrollment)	34	26	37
Alumni opinions	31	29	38
Student evaluations of advising	24	41	33
Evidence of student achievement	24	41	33

Evidence of the impact of teaching on research	15	29	51
Evidence of the impact of teaching on applied scholarship	14	29	51
RESEARCH			
Securing a self-evaluation or personal statement	77%	9%	11%
Securing judgements by colleagues within the institution	73	11	15
Counting numbers of publications and presentations, weighted by type	54	8	37
Asking reviewers to use specific qualitative criteria in their evalutions	44	16	37
Evidence of a research project's impact on teaching	42	26	37
Securing judgments by outside scholars	39	17	43
Evidence of student participation in a research project	37	23	35
Evidence of a research project's impact on applied scholarship	34	22	37
APPLIED SCHOLARSHIP (OUTREACH)			
Self-evaluation or personal statement	74%	10%	13%
Client or user evaluation	35	23	38
Evidence of student participation in a project	32	26	37
Evidnce of the impact of applied scholarship on teaching	30	26	38
Evaluations of the project by specialists	23	22	50
Evidence of the impact of applied scholarship on future research	20	24	48