ACADEMIC ADVISING AT A SATELLITE CAMPUS OF A LARGE MULTI-CAMPUS UNIVERSITY: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY USING SYSTEMS THEORY CONSTRUCTS

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Title: Academic Advising at a Satellite Campus of a Large Multi-Campus University: A Qualitative Case Study Using Systems Theory Constructs

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The purpose of this study is, through a systems perspective, to examine and describe the functions, purposes, and identity of a university advising system comparing the ideals espoused by advisors and administrators to actual practice at a satellite campus of a large public multi-campus university. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and publically available university documents. The product of this qualitative study is a rich description of the academic advising system at Mid-Atlantic University (pseudonym) viewed through the lens of systems theory.

This study found that the academic advising system at MAU is based on the ideals of developmental or learning-centered advising. These ideals are not always realized due to systemic flaws, such as a lack of understanding of these ideals by various personnel, poor assessment practices, and misaligned incentives. Good advising happens primarily due to professional and faculty advisors who enjoy advising, but they are often overwhelmed due to myriad competing demands for their time and energy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus proclaimed, “It is not possible to step twice into the same river” (1968, 91). This early maxim of the perpetuity of change still rings true some 2,500 years later. So too, philosophers, modern scientists, and poets are still trying to understand the mechanics of change. If Heraclitus’ proposition is true, then it can safely be said that the nature of contemporary higher education is constantly in flux. To expand on Heraclitus’ analogy, the waters of a river are constantly moving. Unpredictable, random events influence its contents, temperature, direction, flow rate, turbulence, and countless other attributes. A child skipping a stone across the surface creates a small disturbance. Industrial waste changes its chemistry and temperature. Yet somehow, the river remains a river. Such is the case with the field of academic advising in higher education. The unique environment and history of American higher education has created, shaped, and changed the uniquely American phenomenon of academic advising. Advising at any particular university is also shaped by that university’s particular set of circumstances.

Systems theory is a particularly useful tool in helping to make sense of a phenomenon as complex as advising. Systems, much like Heraclitus’ river, are very complex entities affected and constantly changed by seemingly random occurrences. Social systems, like academic advising, are similarly affected, but not as easily defined. While higher education researchers consistently emphasize the importance of academic advising, the definition of advising remains elusive (Hagan, 2005; Kuh, 1997, 2011; Light, 2001; Schulenberg, 2010; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a).

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), several scholars, and most universities have valiantly attempted to define academic advising, yet disputes and a lack of identity remain (Crookston, 1972; Lowenstein, 1999, 2000, 2005; Schulenberg, 2010; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a; J. Schulenberg & M. J. Lindhorst, 2008). When examined through the lens of systems theory, the identity, purposes, and functions of a system are defined by the system's behavior. In other words, advising is what it does. While top-down definitions, descriptions, and goals are important and necessary, they are incomplete. From a systems perspective, the behavior of a particular system is what defines its identity. This study will examine the behavior of an advising system at a large, public, multi-campus university in the Northeastern United Sates in order to contribute to our understanding of what advising is as related to what it claims to be.

Background

Academic advising has been a part of American higher education in some form since the colonial times, but only became professionalized in the latter 20th century. The changes that transformed American higher education in the 19th century, most notably the shift from prescribed classical education models to those that allowed students to choose courses, created a demand for specialists to help students make educational choices. Like any field, emerging or otherwise, academic advising has gone through many changes historically, and it continues to change today. The interaction between curricular changes, the changing role of faculty, and institutional needs has shaped advising theory and practice and resulted in the emergence of crucial questions (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).

Hagan (2005) showed that Kuhn's (1996) examinations of the history and philosophy of science provides a theoretical construct that is quite useful in understanding the history and evolution of advising theory. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Kuhn (1996) offered a model that illustrates patterns that he found when studying scientific revolutions. He argued that dominant scientific paradigms are slowly eroded by new scientific discoveries, which eventually lead to old paradigms being replaced by new ones, which Kuhn termed a 'paradigm shift'. One famous example is the Copernican Revolution that replaced the paradigm of the geocentric universe (where the Sun revolves around the Earth) with that of the heliocentric universe (where the Earth revolves around the Sun) (T. S. Kuhn, 1996). Due to discoveries related to the ways in which planets moved, cosmologists began to see flaws in the geocentric model. As new discoveries were made, over time, the scientific community eventually agreed that the geocentric model was wrong and that the Earth revolved around the sun. Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2010a) investigated the history of advising and found that the field of advising is similarly marked by changing paradigms.

Historically, the field of advising has borrowed from the social sciences and student development theory (Hagan, 2005; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a). Since the late 1990s, there has been a push for advisors to engage in scholarship toward developing a "professional, academic identity" (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, p. 24). A small number of dominant paradigms that emerged have shaped current theory and practice, but have also contributed to the "indistinct identity" affecting advising programs at institutions of higher education (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). In his landmark study, Crookston (1972) drew a distinction between what he called Developmental Advising and

Prescriptive Advising. Developmental Advising is concerned with the intellectual, psychosocial, and moral development of a student whereas Prescriptive Advising amounts to form signing and paper pushing. The significance of Crookston's work is that he argued that advising can and ought to be an important educative enterprise. The Developmental Advising Model has since been the dominant paradigm in higher education. Dominant as it may be, it has drawn considerable criticism from the advising community.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, researchers began questioning whether the developmental model adequately described what good advising is and should be (Hagan, 2005; Hemwall & Trachte, 2005; Lowenstein, 2005). Lowenstein (2005) argued for what he named "Learning Centered" advising. The distinguishing tenet of this model is that advising should be primarily concerned with student learning and that excellent advising is much like excellent teaching. This was a notable challenge to the paradigm of Developmental Advising, which Lowenstein (2005) characterized as something more akin to counseling than teaching. This signaled an emerging paradigm shift.

The emergence of multiple theories of advising has led scholars to discuss meta-theoretical issues (i.e. theories about theories) regarding the ways in which theories interact with each other. Hagan (2005) argued that competing theoretical paradigms can interact in four ways,

> *peaceful coexistence… argument… evolution,* where adherents of one theory acknowledge the explanatory power of other, perhaps related bodies of theory continually incorporating new theory statements to the approved body of theory statements for the field; and *collaboration*, where differences of perspective are

> encouraged and supported and each perspective is potentially enriched by others (pp. 4-5).

Collaboration, Hagan stated, is the preferred course of action for theory building in academic advising. That is, there is no need for one theory to triumph over another. Multiple theories can be simultaneously entertained by advising theorists, and all can be equally meaningful, standing on their own merits.

Hagan (2005) observed that research in the field of academic advising does not have to be solely based on positivist epistemology. In other words, the way that scientists come to know and make meaning of phenomena is not the only way that we can make knowledge claims about advising. Rather, inquiry in advising can also employ hermeneutics (the study of interpretation), rhetoric, philosophy, narrative theory and other ways of knowing. He stated, "Once the metaphorical leap is made to view the student before you as a 'text,' then all of the truth claims of hermeneutics become available for your use" (Hagan, 2005, p. 5). Research suggests that it is important for all advisors (who come from a wide range of academic disciplines) to tap into the wisdom of their fields toward the end of building theories unique to the field of academic advising (Hagan, 2005; Lowenstein 1999, 2005; Schulenberg & Lindhorst 2008). An example of this is Theresa Musser's (2006) work that used systems theory as a construct to further develop the understanding of academic advising.

Musser (2006) established a foundational understanding of how systems thinking can be applied to the field of advising. However, little else appears in the literature about the field of advising in this context. Further study of advising systems at other

institutions may help to answer some of these questions to see if any patterns emerge. Banathy (1996a) wrote,

> people… cannot give direction to their lives, they cannot forge their destiny, they cannot take charge of their future unless they also develop competence to take part directly and authentically in the design of the systems in which they live and work, and reclaim their right to do so (p. vii).

In her keynote address at the National Academic Advising Association Region 2 Conference, Janet Schulenberg (2010) challenged advisors to do just that. Musser's work was an important first step in using systems theory to understand advising; this study will continue the investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Despite several attempts to define and describe academic advising, the field continues to lack a "distinctive identity" (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a). When examined from a systemic perspective, the identity of a system is defined by its emergent functions or purposes. Advising theory, philosophy, and policy may attempt to define what advising ought to be, but the purpose of a system is best understood by the system's behavior, "not from rhetoric or stated goals" (p. 14). The purpose of this study is, through a systems perspective, to examine and describe the functions, purposes, and identity of a university advising system comparing the ideals espoused by advisors and administrators to actual practice at a satellite campus of a large public multi-campus university.

Significance of the Study

Academic advising is recognized as an underestimated, but essential, academic service in American higher education. Richard Light (2001) stated, "Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (p. 81). Kuh (1997) similarly noted ,"It is hard to imagine any academic support function that is more important to student success and institutional productivity than advising" (p. 11). Despite the importance placed on advising, confusion about its identity, functions, and purposes may be affecting the quality of advising in universities.

Examining advising from a systemic perspective provides a more holistic view of advising. Understanding a particular advising system in this way illuminates the strengths and weaknesses of the system as related to the espoused mission, goals, policies, and procedures put forth by the advising community. This study contributes to our understanding of what advising is by understanding how it functions. As above, a system's functions, purposes, and identity are defined by its behavior. To date, practically all advising theory, philosophy, and research has attempted to construct normative theories or to describe it from a reductionist perspective. Though universities define advising through mission statements, policies, and procedures, understanding how advising behaves systemically will illustrate what it is and whether differences exist.

Research Questions

1. How do administrators, faculty, students, and staff perceive purposes and functions of the advising system at a specific university?

2. Are there discrepancies between the espoused objectives, policies, procedures and processes related to advising and how they are enacted on a satellite campus of a large, multi-campus university?
3. From a systems perspective, how does academic advising function on the satellite campus?

Research Methodology

The researcher used a case study strategy to collect qualitative data. According to Yin (2003), case study can be used to better understand "contextual conditions – believing that they may be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13). Since systems can only be understood contextually, case study methodology is an appropriate approach. This study triangulated three data sources to increase reliability and transparency. The researcher 1) reviewed extant documents from Mid-Atlantic University (MAU) (pseudonym) 2) conducted semi-structured interviews with selected staff and administrators associated with advising and 3) conducted two focus groups, one with a retention committee at the satellite campus and one with undergraduate students at the satellite campus. These data were analyzed using an inductive approach and interpreted through the lens of systems theory.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is systems theory. Systems theory arose out of engineering and cybernetics as a way to understand 'the big picture' of systemic problems. Most of the problems facing society (e.g. poverty, crime, and hunger) are systemic in nature. Systems theory is complementary to scientific reductionism.

Traditional Western science seeks to break problems into their smallest components, analyze them, and solve the problem by optimizing the components. For example, politicians might argue for increasing police presence or enacting tougher laws to reduce crime rather than attempting to understand the societal dynamics that may be the underlying cause of crime. Science has become so specialized over the past 300 years that investigators are often "encapsulated in their private universe" (Banathy, 2006, Systems Theory section, para. 1) and therefore fail to realize systemic influences on problems. To use an analogy, if scientific inquiry examines phenomena under a microscope, systems theory uses a wide lens. Rather than only taking a snapshot of an insect on a forest floor, systems theory films a motion picture from a remote satellite. Systems theory offers researchers a means to understand the phenomena in a fundamentally different way. It is so different that it relies on philosophical assumptions that are quite different than those that underpin traditional science. In order to understand systems theory, it is important to understand its philosophical foundations. The metaphysical concepts of ontology and epistemology are particularly important.

One of the important philosophical foundations is ontology. Ontology is a branch of metaphysics that attempts to describe the nature of reality. In other words, it helps to answer the question 'what is real'? According to Banathy (1996), there have historically been two schools of thought. The first viewpoint assumes that reality consists of things, and the second is that the world consists of processes. Systems theory is grounded in the ontological assumption that the processes are real and things are, metaphorically, "stills out of the moving picture" (Banathy, 2006, Systems Philosophy Section, para. 3). This study will take a snapshot of an advising system for the purposes of analyzing that system

at a specific point in time. Since systems are constantly in flux, the temporal limitations of data collection will only allow the researcher to capture how the system is functioning in a particular place and time. For instance, a specific advising appointment could bring to light systemic influences that affect a particular student's academic decisions made at that specific time.

A second philosophical foundation is epistemology. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates the nature of knowledge. Is it possible to know anything? If so, how are knowledge claims proven or justified? Underlying systems theory is a social constructivist epistemology, which maintains that knowledge is not 'out there to be discovered' but is constructed socially by human beings. Furthermore, when attempting to understand complex social systems, "problems are embedded in uncertainty and require subjective interpretation" (Banathy, 1996b). Constructivism is the epistemological underpinning of this study. Once the philosophical foundations are established, other aspects of systems theory can be better understood.

One important point to understand about systems theory is that cause and effect are not viewed linearly and that the results of input to the system are not immediate. A helpful way to visualize this is to imagine a line of falling dominos. When observing this, an observer can see exactly what caused the first domino to fall as well as each successive domino in the line. Systems theory is not like that. One may not see the result of the input to the systems for quite some time. According to Hutchins (2005), this causes counterintuitive results. This is especially evident when dealing with complex social systems. For instance, a well-intentioned legislature may create a law forbidding a certain drug in order to protect society. But, this may unintentionally create a black-

market for this substance that operates outside laws of commerce spawning violence and contaminated supplies of the drug which may harm public safety and health more than would be the case if the substance were operating within common trade laws.

This study examined the complex social system of academic advising. Hutchins (2005) explained systems theory by organizing it into ten basic concepts. As detailed in Musser's (2006) work, Hutchins' ten basic concepts about systems will be used as a theoretical construct in which to situate the findings of this study. Musser (2006) paraphrased Hutchins (1996) as follows:

1. Each system must be considered in its wholeness, not its parts…
2. There is interconnectedness among all systems within a system…
3. A system is more than the sum of its parts…
4. It is not possible to assign a single purpose to a complex social problem…
5. A system cannot be understood until one understands the multiple functions of the system…
6. A system's structure determines how it functions…
7. The boundaries of any system-of-interest must be defined…
8. Understanding how a system achieves its purpose(s) is essential to understanding the system of interest…
9. All systems must adapt to their environment if they are to survive...
10. Systems are always changing... (Musser, 2006, pp. 87- 105)

Musser (2006) established the need for systems theory research in the field of advising and urged that more be done. She stated: "There are several directions future research into advising could and should take. There is a need to document other advising

models out there…" (p. 113) This study will provide such documentation at a satellite campus of a large, state supported multi-campus university. Further systems research in advising will help to reframe the discussion surrounding the field's continued ambiguous identity. When examined through systems theory, a system's identity is defined by the multiple functions and purposes within the context of the larger system in which it exists. This study will examine and describe the advising system's function and purposes within the context of a satellite campus at a large multi-campus university.

Limitations of the Study

As this is a qualitative study, the primary limitation is that the findings will not be generalizable. Due to limitations of time and financial resources, one satellite campus and specific offices at Main Campus were studied. The researcher has professional relationships with some participants at both sites. These relationships were an asset because they enabled the researcher to gain access to the sites and obtain the cooperation of administrators. However, the relationships could affect what the subjects say in the interviews. In order to control for this, it is common that that the researcher build trust with the subjects and create a safe, non-judgmental environment.

There are also limitations of this study due to participant response. Only four students volunteered to participate. Additionally, the faculty advisers who participated all reported that they value academic advising. Participation from faculty advisers who do not value advising may have added other dimensions to the data.

Definition of Terms

Academic advising: A field of scholarship and practice, much like the fields of law and medicine, broadly concerned with helping college students to make informed educational

choices. (Lowenstein, 2000, 2005; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a; J. K. Schulenberg & M. J. Lindhorst, 2008)

Administrator: A non-faculty employee of the university who has significant decision making ability.

Faculty advisors: Faculty who have advising responsibilities but whose responsibilities are primarily teaching and research.

National Academic Advising Association (NACADA): The professional association for academic advising. This organization provides professional development for advisors and promotes the scholarship of academic advising.

Normative theory: A theory that prescribes how things ought to be.

Paradigm shift: A term coined by Thomas Kuhn that refers to the phenomenon of a dominant scientific theory being disproven and eventually replaced by a new one.

Professional advisors: Faculty or staff who are charged with providing academic advising full time.

Staff: Non-faculty employees of the University. They may be professional or support staff. If they are support staff, they have been noted as such.

Soft-Systems theory: A theory that enables researchers to understand complex social problems as a whole. Traditional science breaks problems into their smallest parts in order to understand them, while systems theory is more holistic (Banathy, 1996b).

Summary

Academic advising at Mid-Atlantic State University is a complex social system. It is difficult to understand this phenomenon through the theoretical lenses provided by traditional social science research methods and theoretical constructs. Systems theory

will help to describe this advising system in a new and interesting way. Most advising research is reductionist in nature; systems research in this field is lacking. While reductionist studies are very important, they are only one way of examining the phenomenon. A description and analysis from a systemic perspective will help to identify variables and influences that may not be seen or considered when examining specific issues in isolation. Musser's (2006) research provides an important starting point for this branch of advising theory, and the current study is a contribution to the conversation.

Case study methodology helps researchers to understand systems by providing a tool for developing a rich, thick description of the system and the context in which it exists. It is impossible to derive a deep understanding and meaning of a system outside of its context. It is also important to note that this case study is a snapshot in time. Systems are constantly changing and evolving due to unpredictable internal and external influences.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of both the historical and theoretical foundations of academic advising in order to paint a picture of the complexity associated with the discipline and practice of the field. Then, systems theory is examined. The purpose of this chapter is to allow the reader to develop an understanding of the richness and complexity of the history and theory of academic advising, a working knowledge of systems theory, and the relevance of systems theory to the study of academic advising.

Historical Foundations of Academic Advising

In his examination of the history of academic advising in the United States, Kuhn divides the historical development of academic advising into three Eras (2008). Frost (2000) described the First Era as "Higher Education Before Academic Advising Was Defined". The founding of Harvard in 1636 marks the beginning of this First Era in which there was no "designated separate role" for advising (Kuhn, 2008 p. 3). Although advising was not a defined role, there were trace elements of duties, such as mentoring, that would eventually be associated with academic advisors.

During this era, the curriculum (with which advising will eventually become inextricably entwined) was a prescribed "classical" education in which students had no choices regarding what to study. The curriculum focused on Greek, Latin, mathematics, and philosophy and the medieval liberal arts (T. L. Kuhn, 2008; Rudolph, 1962; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a). Socially, the colleges were concerned with educating the ruling class and transforming young men into gentlemen and scholars, (Rudolph,

1962), who would become "well-educated ministers, lawyers, and doctors" (T. L. Kuhn, 2008).

Due to the strict nature of the environment and inflexible curriculum, students began to demand changes. In approximately 1870, electives were introduced to the curriculum as a result of student demands. This is when activities associated with academic advising began to occur (Cook, 2009; T. L. Kuhn, 2008). The advisor was a faculty member, chosen by the student, to act as a sort of ombudsman between the student and the faculty. The curricular changes, expansion of university missions, and changing roles of faculty during the late 19th century through the mid-20th century had profound effects on higher education in the United States which gave rise to the Second Era of advising (Cook, 2009; T. L. Kuhn, 2008; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a; Thelin & Hirschy, 2009).

The Second Era of advising, which Frost (2000) named "Academic Advising as a Defined and Unexamined Activity" lasted from approximately 1870–1970. It was during this time that Harvard introduced its elective system, land-grant institutions were created, and the first and second GI Bills were established. The expansion of the curriculum and the increasing needs of increasingly diverse student populations had a profound effect on higher education and, consequently, academic advising (Cook, 2009; T. L. Kuhn, 2008; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a).

During the 19th century, American colleges began to change their curricula. They became increasingly distant from the classical curriculum and embraced courses of study that were more practical and allowed students to make choices about which courses they would take (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a). A significant change occurred when

Harvard instituted an elective system in 1884, which "allowed students a great measure of freedom to construct a course of study" (p. 3). The Morrill Land Grant Act brought higher education to diverse populations and expanded academic programming with majors in agriculture and engineering. It was also during this time that general education requirements were added to the new concept of "major" in order to balance "student choice and faculty direction" (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a).

As a result of this development, it became increasingly important for students to discuss their newly allowed choices with faculty members. Consequently, Harvard established a "board of freshman advisors" in 1889, which was the first institutionalized construct for students and faculty to interact with the intent of helping students to make informed educational decisions and to develop their minds (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a, 2010b).

At Johns Hopkins University, President Daniel Coit Gilman was another early proponent of what would be recognized today as 'academic advising'. He actually employed the term "advisor" to refer to a faculty member who "gave direction to a student concerning an academic, social, or personal matter" (T. L. Kuhn, 2008). Gilman had lofty goals for advising, expecting the effort to produce meaningful conversations between faculty and students concerning educational issues. Despite these ambitions, advising ended up being more of a clerical function of form signing and paper passing. While "institutions like Harvard and Johns Hopkins identified 'advisors' with specified expectations… they paid little attention to the relative success of their advising processes. Although the concept of advising was beginning to be defined, it remained an unexamined activity" (T. L. Kuhn, 2008).

Between 1890 and 1940, a significant expansion occurred in American higher education. Hundreds of institutions were founded and curricula became increasingly complex and varied. In the 1920s the growing complexity of the college education "raised awareness of the complexity involved in mediating students' educational decision-making" (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a). This eventually led to a 1924 Rockefeller grant-funded study by L.B. Hopkins that examined student affairs operations, including academic advising, at fourteen higher education institutions in the U.S. His findings lead him to conclude that:

> successful advisors needed a specific set of skills and knowledge including 1) a real and sincere interest in students, 2) the ability to see things from the students' point of view 3) knowledge of the technical requirements of courses, degree requirements, and entrance requirements, 4) knowledge of possible careers, and 5) knowledge of the individual students. (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a)

He concluded that these duties would be "quite impossible" to fulfill for a faculty member who was also expected to teach full time (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a).

In the mid-20th century, due to the introduction of the first and second GI bills, millions of returning veterans entered the U.S. education system. They brought with them varying degrees of preparedness and other needs to be addressed by the institutions. During this time there was also a dramatic shift in the role of the faculty due to federal research grants and the "prestige of 'Big Science' that is now typical of the modern research university" (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a).

During the turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s the student personnel movement occurred. Universities hired staff to address issues related to developing the "whole student." Increasing access demanded increasing services such as career counseling, personal counseling, student activities, and professional advisors. The universities staffed these areas with psychological counselors. As time went on, each of the functional areas became increasingly professionalized. Academic advising was no exception.

The Third Era of academic advising, "Academic Advising as a Defined and Examined Activity" began in 1970 and continues to this day. In 1972, Crookston and O'Banion independently published articles specifically about academic advising that sparked the beginning of research and scholarship in the field. The year 1977 marked the first ever national conference focused on academic advising, which 300 people attended. In 2010, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) boasted over 10,800 members. In addition to the NACADA Journal, NACADA supports academic advising research in the form of graduate scholarships and research grants for students who are furthering advising research and scholarship (T. L. Kuhn, 2008). A study by Habley (2009) showed that research on academic advising increased exponentially between 1965 and 2008. In terms of post-graduate preparation for careers in this field, NACADA now offers a Master's degree in academic advising via its host institution, Kansas State University.

Theoretical Foundations of Academic Advising

In 1972, Crookston authored an article that marks the beginning of scholarship about academic advising theory. He envisioned academic advising practice as a continuum between "prescriptive advising," which consists of checking requirements and

giving advice on careers and majors, much like a doctor would to a patient - to "developmental advising," which is a collaborative relationship that concerns the development of the whole student. Crookston (1972) argued that:

> Developmental counseling or advising is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills. Not only are these ***advising*** functions but, deriving from the above assumptions, they are essentially ***teaching*** functions as well. (p. 5)

According to Hagan and Jordan (2008), student development theories (such as those developed by Chickering, Kohlberg, Perry, and Kolb) have helped advisors to understand their students in terms of their psychosocial, moral, and cognitive development. Because many professional academic advisors were trained in student affairs master's degree programs, student development theory became the default intellectual basis for advising theory and practice. Developmental Advising, as a result, became the standard of the profession. In the late 1990s researchers began to question the hegemony of developmental advising theory, arguing that the field requires its own theoretical basis (Hagan, 2005; Hagan & Jordan, 2008; Lowenstein, 2000, 2005; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a).

As such, theorists employed analogies to describe what advising is (e.g., advising is teaching and advising is friendship). The National Academic Advising Association embraced the 'advising is teaching' analogy, so much so that they printed bumper stickers emblazoned with that phrase. The notion that advising is teaching lead

Lowenstein (2005) to ask, "If advising is teaching, what do advisors teach?" He answered that question by arguing that Crookston's prescriptive-developmental continuum amounts to a straw man argument as a normative theory of advising. He argued that prescriptive advising obviously falls short as a model for excellent advising, leaving developmental advising as the only alternative. While developmental advising is certainly more desirable than an exclusively prescriptive practice, Lowenstein argued, developmental advising is not the ultimate model.

Lowenstein (2005) characterized prescriptive advising as 'advising as bookkeeping' and developmental advising as 'advising as counseling.' If advising really is teaching, then advising requires a normative theory that goes beyond Crookston's developmental – prescriptive continuum; advising ought to be primarily concerned with intellectual development. Excellent advising, then, is analogous to excellent teaching. An excellent teacher is effective at helping students understand each individual lesson as well as the ways in which the lessons intertwine – aiding students in making meaning of the course as a whole. Lowenstein (2005) dubbed this "learning-centered advising."

In a learning-centered advising, an academic advisor's primary task should be to help students make meaning of the curriculum. Rather than approaching a college degree as a list of loosely related requirements, advisors are uniquely situated to assist students in making connections across the curriculum. When approaching curricular choices in this way, students develop a more meaningful and cohesive educational experience (Lowenstein, 2005). There is some debate as to whether learning centered advising is really entailed in developmental advising; still, many scholars and practitioners have embraced the learning centered model.

Schulenberg and Lindhorst (2010), however, remain concerned that advising scholars are using analogy to describe the field and called for the end of this practice when they stated that "advising is advising." They described academic advising as a field of academic inquiry and practice, similar to the fields of law and medicine. Schulenberg, who holds a Ph.D. in archeology, likened the development of advising to that of archeology. Likewise, criminology began as a branch of sociology. As disciplines develop theories unique to them, they eventually become their own fields.

The effort to develop theory that is unique to advising has prompted a meta-theoretical debate about the necessity, or even possibility, of creating a "unified theory of advising". The consensus among scholars suggests that such a theory is neither needed nor possible (personal conversations with Schulenberg, Hagan, Lowenstein and White). However, Musser and Yoder (2013) argued that constructivism (the notion that knowledge is socially constructed by human beings and not "out there" to be discovered and a philosophical foundation of systems theory) "provides us with a philosophy necessary to develop exemplary advising strategies and techniques that work with our student population as well as the framework upon which to build… advising approaches" (p. 181).

The theories discussed thus far are normative. In other words, they prescribe what advising ought to be. The discipline of systems theory approaches this problem in a different way, describing the system as it is. From the perspective of systems theory, a system (such as advising) is defined by its behavior, not by its "rhetoric and stated goals" (Meadows, 2008). That is, analyzing the function of a system is the only way to define it.

This study examined the function, and therefore definition, of advising at Mid-Atlantic University (pseudonym).

Systems Theory

The theoretical framework of this study is based on systems theory, which is an area of inquiry that attempts to understand the wholeness of scientific and social problems. There "has been a constant yearning for understanding the wholeness of the human experience" throughout human history (Banathy & Jenlink, 2004). In Western science, the quest to understand wholeness began as early as Plato, continued through the Enlightenment, and persists today. The systems movement has been the driving force in understanding the wholeness of scientific inquiry since it became "institutionalized" in the 1950s (Checkland, 2000).

Scholars of systems theory maintain that all problems in the sciences (physical and social) are fundamentally systemic in nature (Hutchins, 1996; Meadows, 2008; Wheatley, 2006). Systems theory attempts to explain problems holistically, which is radically different than the way in which Western science has functioned traditionally. To wit, Banathy (2006) asserts that science has become so specialized, since the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, that investigators are often "encapsulated in their private universe" (2006, Systems Theory section, para. 1). Since Descartes, scientists have solved scientific problems by breaking them apart, continually reducing them to smaller and smaller pieces. The scientific method and the practice of isolating and manipulating variables in controlled environments is the essence of the way traditional scientific inquiry is conducted.

Systems theory turns traditional science on its head. The notion that problems can be broken into parts overlooks the interaction and relationships between them. In other words, wholeness is overlooked. Checkland (1981) argued that "systems thinking… starts from noticing the unquestioned Cartesian assumption: namely that a component part is the same when separated out as when it is part of the whole" (p. 12). Furthermore, systems theory does not exclude the method and practice of traditional science, but builds upon it. Systems theory shows that it is incomplete, but not invalid.

Systems theory is a different type of discipline because it is focused on a specific area like biology or chemistry, an area that is created by the overlapping of other areas, like biochemistry, or an interdisciplinary subject such as city planning or educational administration. Checkland (1981) conceptualized systems thinking as a meta-subject, a subject that can be used to discuss other subjects. That is, the discipline of systemic thinking can be applied to "virtually every other discipline" (p. 5). According to Banathy (1996a), systems theory "is a continuous process of solution finding. It is concerned with what should be. Science, on the other hand, is concerned with what is" (p. 17).

According to Banathy and Jenlink (2004), systems theory is a subset of the broader area of systems inquiry. They define systems inquiry thusly:

> Systems inquiry incorporates three interrelated domains of disciplined inquiry: systems theory, systems philosophy, and systems methodology. Bertalanffy (1968) notes that in contrast with the analytical, reductionist, and linear-causal paradigm of classical science, *systems philosophy* brings forth a reorientation of thought and world view, manifested by an expansionist, nonlinear dynamic, and synthetic mode of thinking. The scientific exploration of systems theories… have

> brought forth a *general theory of systems*…*Systems methodology* provides us with a set of…tools that instumentalize systems theory and philosophy in analysis, design, development, and management of complex systems. (p. 37)

In the remainder of this section, systems philosophy, systems theory, and systems methodology are discussed. Systems philosophy is addressed firstly in order to explain the fundamental philosophical assumptions of systems theory and systems methodology. Establishing an understanding of these assumptions provides a philosophical context in which theory and methodology are situated.

Systems Philosophy

As stated by Banathy and Jenlink (2004), "[s]ystems philosophy seeks to uncover the most general assumptions lying at the roots of any and all of systems inquiry. An articulation of these assumptions gives systems inquiry coherence and internal consistency" (p. 39). Two areas of philosophy that are particularly important for establishing such a foundation are ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with developing an understanding of the nature of reality. In other words, ontology offers answers to the question: 'What is the world made of?' Epistemology, or theory of knowledge, is the branch of philosophy that is tasked with answering the questions: 'Is knowledge possible? What can we know? How do we know that we know it?' The order in which ontology and epistemology are explained here is arbitrary. That is, it is not necessary to understand ontology before understanding epistemology. These two areas are inextricably intertwined. "Our beliefs about what the world is will determine how we see it and act within it. And our ways of perceiving and acting will determine our beliefs about nature" (Banathy & Jenlink, 2004).

Banathy (1996) explained that the study of ontology is largely divided into two camps. Those who subscribe to the first camp believe that the world consists of 'things,' and those in the second camp argue that the world is made of 'processes.' The underlying ontology of systems theory is that the world consists primarily of processes rather than things. In fact, systems theory was developed chiefly as a reaction to the 'things view' of the world. Wheatley (2006) asserted that, "a system is a *set of processes* that are made visible in temporary structures" (p. 11). In other words, the 'things' we see are merely fleeting arrangements of matter or, as Banathy describes it, 'stills' out of a moving picture (1996a).

So, if the world consists of processes, how can observers come to know about them? In order to answer that question, systems theory employs an epistemology of constructivism. Constructivist epistemology asserts that knowledge is not 'out there to be discovered' but is constructed socially by human beings. That is, individuals come to their own understandings of the world by constructing their own meaning. When attempting to make sense of systems, it is important to understand that systemic problems "are embedded in uncertainty and require subjective interpretation" (Banathy, 1996b). While some interpretations may be of more use than others, a salient epistemological assumption of systems theory is that different people will likely have different interpretations of the same problem, and none of the interpretations are more correct than any of the others (Banathy, 1996a). The observer is "connected to what is observed, interacting with it in such a way as to negate any sense of objectivity" (p. 21). In other words, when observing a system, objectivity is not possible.

Systems philosophy is much different than that of traditional science. While intellectual traditions of science can be exclusionary in terms of its epistemological justification (i.e. the scientific method is the only way we can prove we know something), systems theory is more inclusive. It embraces the traditions of both science and the humanities in its attempt to understand problems. The basic principles of systems theory arose out of engineering, cybernetics, and mathematics due to a "compelling need for a unified disciplined inquiry in understanding and dealing with increasing complexities" (Banathy & Jenlink, 2004). Banathy (1996a) stated that systems theory (which he also refers to as *design*):

> always uses the knowledge developed and the practical insights gained in both the sciences and the humanities in the pursuit of practical tasks. In turn, both the sciences and humanities use the creations of design. [Banathy] suggest[s] that the three cultures jointly constitute the wholeness of human intellectual affective and creative experience. A lack of any one of the cultures leads to a grave loss of substance and value, and a loss in the quality of human experience. Such a loss today is manifested in the paucity of design culture in the general human experience. It is clearly manifested in education by the fact that education focuses on literacy in the sciences and the humanities and neglects and is even unaware of the need for literacy in design. (p. 35)

Banathy (1996a) likened the concept of systems theory to a process of designing rather than planning. He argued that planning differs from design in that design is more complex. For example, meetings are planned, and systems are designed. Planners seek to break problems into parts expecting that fixing each part will solve the problem and

lead to the desired outcome. Systems theory looks at problems as a "system of interconnected, interdependent, and interacting problems" and helps the investigator to understand the problem as a whole (p. 19). The components of the system interact and affect one another, and the essence of a given component is how it relates to the whole.

Banathy (1996a) further refined systems theory by distinguishing hard systems from soft systems (also called human social systems or human activity systems). Hard systems theory concerns the analysis of relatively closed systems, such as machines, which are the domain of systems engineering and systems analysis. Hard systems theory is, in fact, so embedded in the hard sciences that researchers in the formative years of systems theory attempted to produce "a mathematically expressed general theory of systems" (Checkland, 2000, p. 11). Ultimately that effort failed, but scholarship of systems theory thrived. Areas such as systems engineering and systems analysis became successful in tackling certain types problems but did not work well for others.

Banathy (1996a) and Checkland (1981, 2000) drew a distinction between "structured problems" which are in the "domain of systems engineering" or "hard systems theory" and "unstructured problems" which are "manifested with a feeling of unease, and they cannot be explicitly stated without oversimplifying them" (Banathy, 1996a, p. 27). Checkland (1981), describes structured problems as those that can have a clear, objectively correct answer (e.g. What can we do to lower our electric bill?), while solutions to unstructured problems "cannot be explicitly stated without ...appearing to oversimplify the situation" (p. 154). Checkland also notes that unstructured problems are "not problems as such but… *problem situations*…ones in which the designation of

objectives is itself problematic… They are conditions to be alleviated rather than problems to be solved" (p. 155).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s systems thinkers applied concepts of hard systems thinking to unstructured social problems, or problem situations, as it were. This was when the term 'social engineering' began to be used. Researchers found that approaching unstructured social problems with hard systems theory, which was created to solve structured problems, proved to be troublesome. During 1970s and 1980s researchers recognized this issue, and the field of soft systems theory emerged. Soft systems differ from hard systems in that soft systems demand "constant creative input, which requires flexibility and intuition" (Banathy, 1996a). Moreover, soft systems are constructive rather than analytical. The attempt to apply hard systems thinking to social problems proved to be problematic because social systems embody a level of complexity that cannot be addressed or approached in the same manner as engineering problems (Banathy, 1996a; Checkland, 1981, 2000).

Soft systems theory is primarily concerned with human social systems, where problems are exclusively unstructured. Banathy and Jenlink (2004) explained that there are several categories of human social systems "premised on (1) the degree to which they are open or closed (2) their mechanistic vs. systemic nature (3) their unitary vs. pluralistic position on defining their purpose and (4) the degree and nature of their complexity" (p. 44). One such category of human social systems is purpose-seeking systems. These types of systems are "ideal seeking…open and coevolve with their environment… they constantly seek new purposes for new niches in their environments" (pp. 44-45). Academic advising falls within the classification of a purpose-seeking system.

As discussed in the above sections on history and theory of academic advising, scholars argued that advising systems are constantly filling niches that emerge as higher education evolves. Indeed, this is related to the difficulty of defining academic advising as a field. Schulenberg and Lindhorst's (2010a) argument that advising has unique purposes, which have co-evolved with the history of higher education, is part and parcel of advising being a purpose-seeking system.

Checkland (2000) developed Soft Systems Methodology as a tool to help observers understand, and ultimately improve, soft systems. In his first book on the topic, he proposed a "seven-step model" which has since been replaced by the "four activities model" (Checkland, 2000). Checkland revised the seven-step model because he felt that its approach was overly linear. He defined the four activities model as:

1. Finding out about a problem situation, including culturally/politically;
2. Formulating some relevant purposeful activity models
3. Debating the situation, using the models, seeking from that debate both
    a. Changes which would improve the situation and are regarded as both desirable and (culturally) feasible, *and*
    b. The accommodations between conflicting interests which will enable action-to-improve to be taken;
4. Taking action in the situation to bring about improvement. (p. S21)

Since the intent of this study is to describe a unique 'problem situation' with its own unique sets of circumstances, the academic advising system at MAU, only activities 1 and 2 are addressed here. Activities 3 and 4 are concerned with changing and improving the problem situation, which is not the aim of this study.

In order to 'find out' about a problem situation, (activity 1 above), Checkland (2000), proposed that one must engage in "rich picture building", that is, drawing pictures of the system. Doing so provides "a better medium than linear prose for expressing relationships" (p. S22). This picture should be shared with the people involved with the problem situation in order to ensure that the observer has adequately represented it. This can be done by interviewing stakeholders, creating the picture, and then confirming it by doing a second set of interviews for feedback. Drawing a rich picture will help to identify people or groups of people who may be stakeholders in the problem situation. Checkland also emphasized that it is very important that the investigator develop a framework to understand the socio-cultural and political dynamics in play within the system.

Activity 2 focuses on building 'purposeful activity models.' These models are "intellectual devices – whose role is to help structure an exploration of the problem situation being addressed" (Checkland 200, p. S26). Checkland (2000) clarified the use of the term 'model' because the culture of inquiry is so steeped in the methods of traditional science that the term "refers to some representation of some part of the world outside ourselves" (p. S26). The philosophy of systems theory, again, postulated that reality and knowledge are not 'out there to be discovered,' but constructs of an individual's mind that are socially constructed and verified. In the context of systems theory, models "are simply devices to stimulate, feed, and structure" the discussion about what the problem situation actually is (p. S26).

In order to go about building a model of a complex, purposeful system, one must define the system to be studied. Checkland (2000) calls this the *root definition*. The root definition is built around "an expression of a purposeful activity as a transformation

process (T)" (p. S27). The transformation process can be stated simply and broadly, such as 'This is a system that makes widgets.' But, a statement this vague will lead to a model that is so general that it would be meaningless. To develop more nuanced models, Checkland advocates for including some or all of the items known by the mnemonic CATWOE. The elements of CATWOE are:

> Customer – those affected by the system's activities…
>
> Actors – those who carry out, or cause to be carried out the main activities of the system…
>
> Transformation – the core of a root definition, the means by which defined inputs are transformed into defined outputs…
>
> Worldview – an outlook, framework, or image which makes this particular root definition meaningful…
>
> Ownership - those who have the ultimate power to cause the system to cease to exist…
>
> Environmental constraints – features of the system's environments and/or wider systems which it has to take as 'given' (Checkland, 1981).

Checkland (2000) asserted that any model "should be built in about 20 minutes" (p. S27). So, while CATWOE might seem to be painstakingly tedious and technical, the person or group building the model does not need any special skills.

In addition to CATWOE, Checkland has found that using the PQR form is useful in building models. The PQR form is "do P by Q in order to contribute to achieving R, which answers three questions: What to do (P) How to do it (Q) and Why do it (R)?"

(Checkland, 2000, p. S28). Using each of these tools can help investigators develop the root definition, or transformational process, of a system.

The three areas of systems inquiry (systems philosophy, systems theory, and systems methodology) were described in order to provide a general overview of the field. The fundamental task of systems theory is to understand problems holistically. The philosophical assumptions and methodology described provide context to explore systems theory in more depth. Hutchins (1996), another prominent theorist, explained systems theory in depth by distilling it into ten basic concepts. His ten basic concepts provide a useful framework for explaining the broad, complex discipline of systems theory. The next section is an exposition of these concepts, which are used in Chapter 5 to frame the findings of this study.

Hutchins' Ten Basic Concepts of Systems Theory

Hutchins' (1996) first concept of systems theory, which he characterizes as a paradigm shift, is the notion that *a system must be considered in its wholeness, not its parts*. As explained earlier, Western scientific thought, since the time of Descartes and Newton, has rested on the concept of reductionism, breaking problems into their smallest parts. Reductionist thinking postulates that fixing and optimizing each part will fix or optimize the entire system. Similarly, scientists and philosophers predominately viewed the universe as a machine when reductionist thinking was employed. To think systemically, an observer must consider the entirety of the system.

Consider an electric bass guitar. The musical instrument consists of a body, a neck, metal strings, a tuning mechanism, and electronics. Each of these components comprises the system of the instrument. Analyzing the string's properties (the type of

alloy used, the gauge of metal wire, and the way the string is wound) can be very useful in helping to determine how that particular string might sound. But, the string is useless without the remaining parts of the instrument. That is, the whole of the instrument must be considered in order to understand how the instrument is played and why it sounds the way it does. Clearly, each of the components adds specific characteristics that contribute to how the instrument will sound, but it is the wholeness of the instrument that ultimately produces its sound.

Hutchins' second principle maintains *that there is interconnectedness among all systems within a system.* While principle two is similar to principle one, principle two emphasizes that a system can only be understood by understanding how the components of the system work together. Principle one states that we need to consider the wholeness, while principle two urges us to consider the *interaction*. Returning to the metaphor of a bass guitar, principle two is concerned with how the vibrating strings interact with the electric pickups, neck, and bridge. Changing just one of those components will change the sound and playability of the instrument.

Principle three states that *a system is more than the sum of its parts.* A system "only has identity or meaning in the context of the system around it" (p. 39). In systems theory, this property is known as emergent function. The function of a system is very important because a system's identity is defined by its function. When thinking systemically, one must understand that the function of any system can only be defined within the context from which it emerges.

Hutchins (1996) explained that a systems function, or identity, is embedded in its position in the "hierarchy of systems" (p. 40). The different levels in the hierarchy of

systems are subsystems, which are embedded in suprasystems. Using a university as an example, a department is a subsystem of a college, which is a subsystem of academic affairs, which is a subsystem within the university. Moreover, "a systems function is understood from the perspective of the next higher level in the hierarchy" (p. 40). What one defines as a subsystem or suprasystem is an arbitrary, but crucial, decision that a system's investigator must make. In the context of a university, the function, or identity, of the academic advising system is defined by the other systems. Keeping in mind that the function is understood as an interpretation by people in a system, it is clear that a function as complex as academic advising can have a wide range of interpretations. The fourth principle of systems theory accounts for this complexity.

Hutchins' fourth principle maintains that *it is not possible to assign a single purpose to a complex social system.* According to Hutchins, "assigning a purpose to a system is misleading" because one person's idea of what the purpose of a system is can be different from another's. Furthermore, systems usually have more than one purpose. Currently, the purpose of a college degree can be very different, depending on the point-of-view of the person being asked. For instance, a business leader might believe that the purpose of a college education be to prepare students for the workforce. Whereas, a professor might think that the purpose is to teach people to think critically so that they do not allow themselves to be pawns of societal powerbrokers (e.g. the business leader). Universities also have a research function, an economic function, a service function, and countless others. The point here is that the observer of the system defines its purposes.

A system cannot be understood until one understands the multiple functions of the system is the fifth principle of systems theory. Every system has within it several

functional subsystems. Broadly construed, the subsystems are input, transformation, and output. The input subfunction of an organization is that which takes in information. A university, for instance, receives information from policy makers, students, parents, business leaders, and a myriad of other sources. The transformation subfunction is that which the organization uses to make meaning of the new information. The output subfunction describes how the organization responds to it. Those within the system transform the received information, and then the decision makers choose how, or whether, to respond to it. It is necessary for the observer to identify each of the subfunctions in order to understand how the system works.

Subfunctions are most often distributed throughout an organization. In the case of input, Hutchins (1996) asserted that it is "misleading to ascribe the input subfunction to a limited number of individuals, offices, or groups within an organization" and that limiting "information gathering to a single process or single organizational component" would be folly (p. 63). In a university, information is input through students, support staff, professionals, and various committees. Thus, the input subfunction is distributed throughout the organization.

Once information is brought into the system through the input subfunction, the information must be transformed through what Hutchins (1996) called "input conversion" (p. 67). If the information challenges the way in which the organization understands it, the organization can easily interpret the information so that it fits into its current understanding of the environment. In other words, the organization may not appropriately respond to change. Identifying the subfunction that gathers information and the process of "converting it to internalized meaning is a critical process that can

significantly help us to understand how a system works, where breakdowns occur, and how it might be improved, and in general why it does what it does" (p. 67).

In organizations, the output subfunction is essentially the decision that is made once the organization makes meaning of the input. This too is typically a distributed function. While executives may make the final decisions regarding strategy and other high level concerns, non-executives must have a deep understanding of the strategy and values of an organization. This is necessary so that non-executives understand the thinking of executives in order to make decisions that the executives might make. In other words, subordinates need to understand how their local decisions affect the global environment of the organization.

A system's structure determines how it functions is the sixth principle. There is a relationship between the parts of the system and the way that they function. "The function is created by the structure, and so long as the function is preserved, the organization and the parts can vary" (p. 82). Returning to the example of a bass guitar, the function of this instrument is to produce low register musical notes. The structure of the instrument, the arrangement of the strings, body, and neck, allow the bass to perform its function. Bass builders can rearrange that structure in many different ways (e.g. varying string length, building materials, electronics, making the neck fretted or fretless), yet the function of the bass remains the same. Organizations are similar. The function of a university registrar's office is to create a course schedule and record students' academic activity. These offices can be organized in multiple ways, some with departments handling each function separately, and some with a few people handling all of the functions. The structure varies, but the basic function of a registrar's office is

fundamentally the same at all universities. However, if one were to remove the strings from a bass or remove a record keeping mechanism from a registrar's office, the function would no longer be the same. So, while the structure can vary, it is essentially defined by its function.

Hutchins' seventh principle asserts that *the boundaries of any system-of-interest must be defined.* Traditionally, systems theory has drawn a distinction between open and closed systems. The distinction here is that external forces can influence open systems while such forces do not influence closed systems. Early systems theory made this a binary distinction, but as systems theory has evolved, openness and closedness is now understood as a continuum. Defining the boundary of a closed system is relatively easy to do. A closed system, such as a clock, has obvious boundaries. At the other end of the spectrum, social systems are very open, as new information is constantly coming in.

Defining the boundary of a social system is no easy task. It is not like a physical system that has clearly defined boundaries. Complicating the issue, boundaries of social systems can be dynamic. Hutchins (1996) asserted that the boundary of a social system can be identified at "the point at which order or structure changes; it identifies an entity that has more functional unity than the environment around it" (p. 102). In the end, the boundary is what one defines it to be.

Principle eight states that *understanding how a system achieves its purpose(s) is essential to understanding the system of interest.* A key point to remember is that purposes are generally subjective, defined by the observer. So too, the underlying purpose of any living system, including social systems, is survival. One must

acknowledge these assumptions when identifying purposes and determining how a system accomplishes them.

Systems achieve their purposes through control mechanisms, commonly referred to as feedback loops. Feedback loops can be either balancing or reinforcing. A balancing loop is one that maintains stability in a system, and a reinforcing loop can either increase or decrease the effect of incoming information. An example of a balancing loop is a thermostat in a heating system, which keeps a temperature within a pre-set range. A positive reinforcing loop amplifies behavior, such as an electric amplifier for a bass guitar, and a negative reinforcing loop attenuates behavior.

These control mechanisms do not have immediate effects on systems; there are delays in response. Consider the thermostat of a home heating system. When a thermostat is set at 68 degrees, the furnace often overshoots the set temperature by a couple of degrees before the thermostat sends a message to turn off the heat. In most physical or relatively closed systems, feedback delays can be relatively short. In social systems, which are relatively open, delays in feedback may sometimes take decades. Because of these large response times, changes made in a system can be counterintuitive.

An example of the counterintuitive behavior of systems can be illustrated by recruitment strategies of colleges. Imagine that a campus is experiencing a drop in enrollment in an environment where there is a drop in the number of high school graduates in the campus's recruiting area. To increase enrollment, administrators decide to expand athletics programs to recruit athletes. This may result in a brief uptick in enrollment, which pleases administrators in the short-term. But, in order to admit some of the athletes, the campus decides to compromise on student quality. This causes an

increased demand on tutoring services and other campus resources. Consequently, in a few years, the attrition rate is so dramatic that enrollment actually decreases. By focusing on a short-term fix, the campus has ignored the underlying problem, not enough high school graduates. The campus may have stronger long-term numbers if they focused on expanding recruitment efforts outside of traditional age students. But, by redoubling the efforts to recruit traditional age students, the short-term palliative effect distracts administrators while the underlying problem further erodes enrollment in the long-term.

All systems must adapt to their environment if they are to survive is the ninth principle. The literature on systems theory also refers to this as learning (Senge, 2006; Hutchins, 1996). Learning, Hutchins (1996) writes, is "not just the acquisition of a new fact skill; it restructures the cognitive, emotional, and physical nature of a system" (p. 137). Hutchins explained that, from a systems perspective, learning is explained by seven principles:

1. Learning is driven by a search to explain a discrepancy between past knowledge and present or anticipated experience in order to predict the future and increase the probability of survival.
2. Learning is the active reconstruction of past knowledge and skill in order to integrate new information or behavior at a higher level of complexity.
3. Learning is socially mediated and contextual.
4. Learning requires feedback against an internalized standard or an accepted standard.

5. Learning requires integration…which requires motivation and persistence.
6. Learning is both cognitive and metacognitive.
7. Learning is both a product and a process. (p. 138)

These seven principles of systemic learning illustrate the complexity of the way in which systems process and make meaning of new information. Senge (2006) suggested that learning changes the mental models of those within an organization. Rather than "seeing ourselves as separate from the world" to think systemically, we must understand that we are inextricably intertwined in the world. Those within "learning organizations" are constantly evaluating and revising their views of reality and knowledge. That is, they fully embrace the notion that knowledge is constructed socially, and hence, a product of its context. It is this realization that allows organizations to respond effectively to new information. When information is not viewed in this way, dysfunction can occur due to rigid thinking and reliance on irrelevant, obsolete mental models.

The final principle, principle 10, of systems theory is the assertion that *systems are always changing.* In fact, when a system ceases to change, it dies. While some systems appear to be unchanging, this is really a state of equilibrium. A gymnast performing the iron cross ideally appears to be motionless. However, while he is holding this excruciatingly strenuous pose, he is making countless imperceptible adjustments, or changes, with his musculature. While some in an organization may resist change therefore preventing the organization from changing, they are actually allowing the organization to change by ignoring it. And, ironically, their unwillingness to respond appropriately to change may kill the organization.

Advising Systems

Hutchins' ten basic principles of systems theory were utilized to frame the findings of an empirical study by Musser (2006) that employed systems theory as a theoretical construct to explain academic advising. In her review of the literature, Musser (2006) found that qualitative research in academic advising was scant, and systems theory research in advising was virtually non-existent. Musser's study, a doctoral dissertation, was the first to explicitly use systems theory as a way of explaining academic advising. It was conducted at Eastern State University (ESU, pseudonym for Musser's site), a large, public research institution on a primarily residential campus in the University Academic Services Center (UASC). Most students at ESU were advised by the UASC at some point in their time at the university.

Musser used a case study approach as the methodology for her dissertation. She gathered data using interviews, observations, and document analysis. Her data collection occurred in three phases. Phase 1, the fact-finding stage

> consisted of gathering data and artifacts by the investigator. Information such as the University administrative structure… a campus tour… [and] the history of advising services" at ESU were collected (Musser, 2006, p. 50).

She also spoke with members of the campus community to find out who should participate in the study, informed potential participants of the study about the research being conducted, and had willing participants sign an informed consent form.

In Phase 2, Musser conducted observations and interviews. She observed student academic advising appointments, staff meetings, staff assistant procedures, and advisor training. She interviewed "nine advisors, ten faculty and administrators from systems

outside of academic advising, two advising administrators, four support staff, and twenty undergraduate students. One high level administrator was interviewed by telephone at her request. Thus, a total of forty-six interviews were conducted" (p. 53). In Phase 3, Musser planned to meet with focus groups "to summarize and validate the descriptions at ESU" (p. 55). She was unable to do so due to extenuating circumstances outside of her control.

Musser (2006) suggested that understanding the history of an advising system at a university is crucial in understanding the current state of the system. The history reveals the culture, values, and norms of the system. Without examining the history and only discussing the current state of affairs, there is a lack of context. As noted above, systems theory is highly contextual.

Musser also found that UASC's relationships with other departments on campus were crucial to understanding the office's purposes, which is consistent with systems theory. Most notable were the relationships with the Admissions and Records, Career Services, Residence Life, the Counseling Center, Academic Colleges, and New Student Services. The model below illustrates the directionality of interactions that academic advising has with other departments. Recall that Checkland recommended drawing pictures in order to explain complex systems.

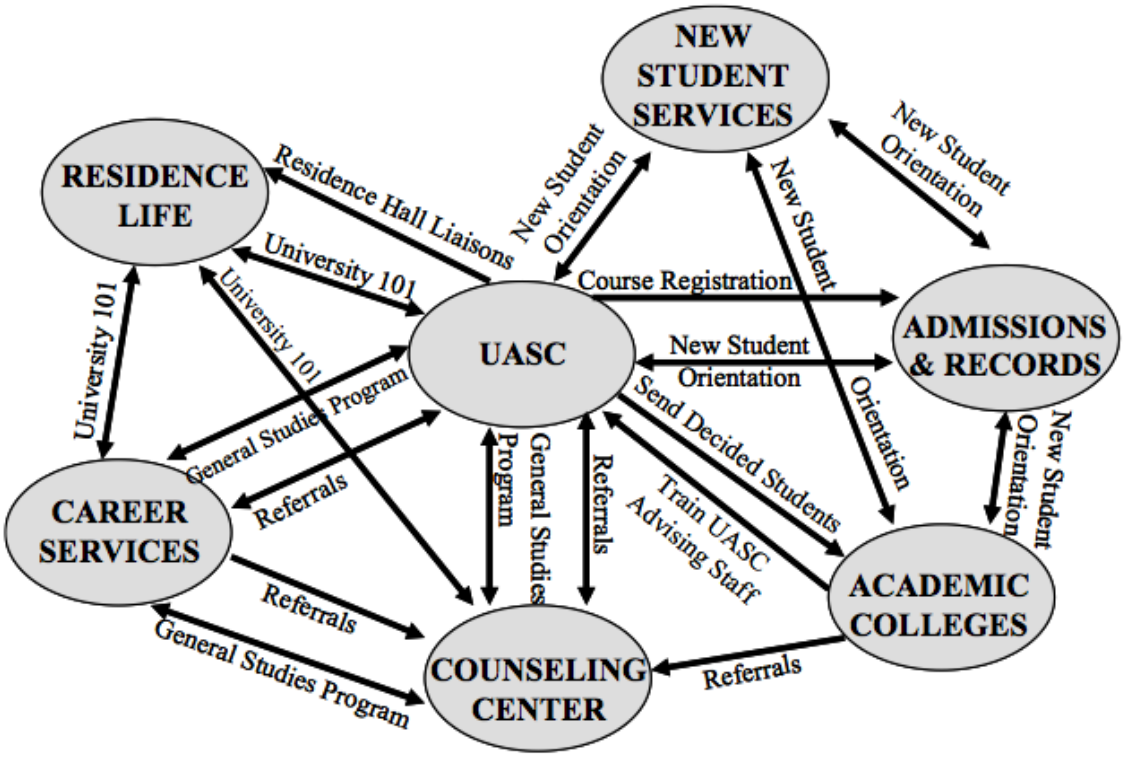

Figure 1 Advising system at ESU. Used with permission from (Musser, 2006, p.27).

The single arrows represent one-way input, and double arrows represent two-way input. This diagram illustrates the interconnectedness of the subsystems that are related to academic advising. Each subsystem is related to every other subsystem, so when something changes in one of them, it affects all others. For example, if Admissions & Records changes the way they admit students or record student information, the change will affect UASC, Academic Colleges, and New Student Services directly. Following the arrows, that change can have ripple effects throughout the rest of the system.

During Musser's (2006) study, a significant change occurred. The director of the UASC was terminated, and an interim director was appointed. The administration wanted to dissolve the department. In the discussion of her findings, Musser asserted that the advising system immediately went into survival mode. As noted above, the primary

purpose of any system is to survive, and social systems are self-organizing. The interim director was able to reorganize the UASC and was ultimately successful in saving the department. If he had not been successful,

> the demise of the UASC would have had profound affects (sic) on the entire advising system at ESU. The 7,000 students advised in the UASC would have been placed out into the colleges for advising. The colleges did not have the staff or resources to advise these students. The entire system would have had to restructure if the UASC had not restructured first. (pp. 91-92)

While the reorganization of UASC did affect other departments, the advising system did not collapse. This example illustrates the primacy survival as the underlying purpose of a system.

Musser's discussion of findings was situated within Hutchin's ten basic concepts of Systems Theory. Explaining her findings in this way enabled her to address the ways in which all of the aspects of systems theory were helpful in understanding the advising system ESU. In order to provide continuity in the investigation of advising systems, the author organized the findings of this study in a similar manner.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the historical and theoretical foundations of academic advising are explained to relay the complexity and richness of this emerging academic discipline of theory and practice. The advising system in the United States is uniquely American in that the historical context of higher education is what spawned the need for academic advising, as it is known today. Additionally, an overview of systems thinking, specifically as related to understanding complex social systems was discussed. Studying

advising in this way adds a needed dimension that can help advisors and administrators make sense of what advising is (i.e. its emergent function), what paradigmatic theories are shaping the system, and what might be done to get closer to designing a system which aligns advising practice with whatever theoretical constructs of advising are being espoused at their institutions.

The normative theories that have been developed to define advising are crucial to the advancement of the field, yet academic advising has a continuing identity crisis. From a systems theory perspective, the functions and purposes of a given system are what define its identity. This study uses systems theory as a lens to interpret and describe the way in which the advising system at Mid-Atlantic University functions. A significant point here is that systems theory is based on a constructivist epistemology; each person interprets and makes meaning of a phenomenon for him or herself. Objectivity, then, is not possible.

The essential reason that the advising system at Mid-Atlantic University is being investigated in this study is that the university has put a great amount of effort into define advising at MAU. Systems theory is an ideal tool to decipher how the system functions, what its purposes are, and what advising actually is at this time at this university. This study will reveal the inner-workings of academic advising on a satellite campus in order to learn the extent to which it aligns with the espoused ideals set forth by the university.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

This purpose of this study is to provide a rich description of the academic advising system at MAU, viewed through the lens of systems theory, in order to understand discrepancies between the espoused goals of advising and the way it actually functions at a satellite campus. Qualitative research is an appropriate strategy for this study because the fundamental tenets of qualitative research are similar to those of systems theory. According to Merriam (1988), qualitative research is "[i]n contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research strives to understand how all the parts work together to form a whole" (p. 16). As discussed in Chapter 2, the primary aim of systems theory is to understand the wholeness of phenomena. Case study is an ideal methodology for this task.

So too, qualitative research relies on the same philosophical assumptions as systems theory:

> Traditional [scientific] research is based on the assumption that there is a single, objective reality… that we can observe, now, and measure… In contrast, qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities – that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. (Merriam, 1988, p. 17)

As detailed in Chapter 2, systems are understood and explained as interpretations of the investigator.

Creswell (2008) stated that qualitative research is important when the study calls for a "*complex*, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people" (p. 40). He also argued that qualitative research approaches need to be used when the investigator seeks to understand an issue or problem within its own context and when quantitative measures do not fit the research problem. Since this study requires the investigator to understand the interactions between people, and is highly contextual, it must be studied using qualitative research.

Research Questions

1. How do administrators, faculty, students, and staff perceive purposes and functions of the advising system at a specific university?
2. Are there discrepancies between the espoused objectives, policies, procedures and processes related to advising and how they are enacted on a satellite campus of a large, multi-campus university?
3. From a systems perspective, how does academic advising function on the satellite campus?

Research Paradigm

Qualitative research can be conducted within multiple research paradigms. Identifying a research paradigm for a study is of paramount importance when conducting scholarly inquiry. The research paradigm provides the fundamental framework for a given study and includes important concepts that must be explained by the investigator.

Guba & Lincoln (1994) define research paradigms as "a set of *basic beliefs* (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world," the individual's place in it, and the range

of possible relationships to that world…" (p. 107). In order to establish this worldview, three *questions* need to be considered, those of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. These questions, respectively are, what is the nature of reality, what can be known about it, and how can a researcher "go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Guba & Lincoln (1994) identified four basic research paradigms: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism. The research paradigm employed in this study is constructivism. The constructivist research paradigm is congruent with the philosophical assumptions of systems theory. In constructivism, ontology is relativist, in other words, reality is a function of the perception of the individual perceiving the world. Realities are "multiple, intangible mental constructions" of individuals (p. 111). This is in contrast to traditional science, or the positivist paradigm, which views reality as objective and external to the observer. The epistemology of the constructivist paradigm is subjectivist in that "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111). Finally, the methodology is "hermeneutical and dialectical," that is, the investigator's understanding of phenomena is based on her or his individual interpretation of it.

Rationale for Utilizing a Case Study Approach

Yin (2009) stated that case study is an appropriate strategy for "inquiry that… investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, p. 18). According to Merriam (1988), three fundamentals need to be considered when

deciding on a research methodology, the type of questions being asked, the "amount of control" needed to answer the research questions, and "the desired end product" (p. 9). While 'what' and 'how many' questions are suited to survey or experimental research, 'how' and 'why' questions are better answered by case study (Yin, 2009; Merriam, 1988). Yin adds that 'what' questions that are exploratory in nature may also be investigated using a case study strategy.

This study satisfies the three criteria for selecting case study as a methodology. The research questions in this study focus on how and why the advising system at MAU (pseudonym) functions as it does. In terms of researcher control, in case study research, there is no need for the investigator to isolate or manipulate variables as is done in experimental research. This study does not require any degree of control over the case to be studied, so this criterion for selecting case study methodology is met. Finally, the end product of this study is a thick, rich description of the case, which is an appropriate product of a case study.

Merriam (1988) identified three types of case studies: descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative. According to Tobin (2010), descriptive studies "seek to reveal patterns and connections, in relation to theoretical constructs, in order to advance theory development" (p. 3). This study fits this definition of descriptive a case study because it seeks to use the theoretical lens of systems theory to describe an academic advising system. Ultimately, this study contributes to the current efforts to develop advising theory.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher gathered data from staff and administrators via one-on-one semi-structured interviews at both the satellite and Main

Campuses. The researcher conducted two focus groups, one consisting of undergraduate students at the satellite campus and one consisting of a committee charged with improving retention on the satellite campus. Data collected in these formats enabled the researcher to deeply examine how the participants perceive the advising system.

The Case

Merriam (1988) stated that "once the general problem has been identified, the unit of analysis can be defined… [t]he unit of analysis or 'the case' can be an individual, a program, an institution, a group, an event, a concept" (p. 44). In this study, the case, also referred to as the unit of analysis, is the academic advising system at Mid-Atlantic University which is a large, public, multi-campus research university in the Northeastern United States. Merriam (1988) maintained that a case study of an individual program can produce "a holistic, intensive, rich description" of a given program (p. 45); this is the end product of this investigation.

This study was conducted primarily at a satellite campus of Mid-Atlantic University because the purpose of the study is to examine the ways in which academic advising functions at a satellite campus in the context of systems theory. Specific individuals at Main Campus were included due to the perspective they bring to the study. The researcher chose MAU due to its reputation as a leader in academic advising and the complexity of the university advising system. Two unique features that set MAU apart in the field of advising are that it is one of the few universities that employs a Dean of Advising, and it publishes a peer reviewed journal specifically focused on scholarship related to Academic Advising.

A distinguishing factor of MAU is that the recently retired Undergraduate Advising Dean was intimately involved with the growth and prominence of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and the writing of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for advising. He is a prolific author of advising research and is a recipient of the Virginia Gordon Award, which is the most prestigious honor bestowed by NACADA. Through his work at MAU, he has helped to make advising an essential component of the teaching and learning mission at the university. Toward that end, he created a Academic Advising Board (AAB) (pseudonym) that functions as an advisory board to the administration and Faculty Congress on all advising issues. The existence of the AAB demonstrates further demonstrates the importance that MAU places on advising.

A second feature that makes Mid-Atlantic University worthy of study is its size and complexity. MAU is a land grant university with over 90,000 students and over 20 campuses dispersed across the state. All of the campuses, including the Main Campus, operate under the same advising policies and procedures. However, one centralized unit, the School of General Studies (SGS) oversees academic administration of the campuses. MAU's foundational advising documents, such as the Advising Handbook and Faculty Congress policy, are intended to ground advising practice at MAU, regardless of location. Each campus has its own leadership in place and has a level of independence to operate within the established advising policies. As mentioned, the same policies govern advising at all of the campuses, but it is up to each campus to implement advising while operating under this policy. The geographic dispersion of the campuses essentially creates mini-laboratories where the 'theory' of academic advising has been adapted to

advising in action at a satellite campus. This provides an in-depth description of advising at a satellite campus and how it functions within the advising system at MAU.

Each campus has a professional advisor representing the Advising College (AC) who is charged with bringing excellence in advising to their campus. The AC is a unit of enrollment that was established in order to provide advising for students who have not decided on a major, also referred to as 'undecided' or 'exploratory' students. The AC has representation at each campus. This representative primarily advises students within the AC but also has other duties, such as providing professional development for faculty advisors. These duties can vary by campus. Data collected in this study further defined the different perceptions study participants have of this role at the branch campus being examined.

Full-time faculty, who may or may not be tenure track, advise students who have decided on majors. Similarly, each College at Main Campus is represented on each campus by a faculty member who is designated as the College Representative (CR). The CRs are charged to be resident experts on their respective colleges and are to serve as resources for faculty, staff, and students especially with regard to academic advising.

Population

The population studied is a satellite campus of MAU. The satellite campuses of MAU are administratively housed by one unit, the School of General Studies (SGS). The Vice President of the SGS has ultimate responsibility for the academic administration at satellite campuses. The campus selected for this study was chosen due to convenience of location for the researcher. Ideally, all campus locations would be investigated, but such a project is time and cost prohibitive and beyond the scope of this study.

To collect data for this study, the researcher interviewed the Advising Director, Admissions Director, Campus Dean, and the Associate Dean of Academics, all of whom are located at the study site. The researcher interviewed specific people at Main Campus due to their association with academic advising: the current and the recently retired Undergraduate Advising Deans (UAD) and the Administrative Director of the School of General Studies, and an Associate Undergraduate Advising Dean. These individuals were interviewed because they are instrumental in the administration of advising and have influence on the system throughout the university. The researcher also conducted two focus groups. One focus group consisted of undergraduate students at the satellite campus. The second focus group interviewed was a committee focused on improving student retention at the satellite campus. Additionally, five faculty advisors at the satellite campus were also interviewed. See Appendix B for a table of participants.

Piloting Procedures

Before data collection was conducted, the researcher piloted the interview questions in order to refine the interview questions that would be used during one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The interview protocol, found in Appendix A, is adapted with permission from Musser (2006). The questions were reviewed by content experts and revised based on their recommendations.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in two phases. The primary goals of Phase 1 were to build rapport, gain permission, gather documents for analysis and identify participants for the study. Creswell (2008) emphasized the importance of building rapport with "gatekeepers" at research sites, especially with regard to case study research. Phase 2 was

the data collection and analysis phase. The following sections explain the procedures for both phases.

During Phase 1, the researcher gathered and analyzed data from MAU's academic advising policy, the web sites of the Academic Advising Board, and the Council of Deans in order to determine the espoused objectives, policies, and procedures of the advising system.

The researcher met via online video conferencing with the campus Associate Dean of Academics (ADA) and Campus Dean to build rapport, explain the study, and obtain permission to conduct research at the campus. The researcher contacted appropriate managers at Main Campus to obtain permission to interview their staff. These are the "gatekeepers" of the campuses (Creswell, 2008). A total of sixteen semi-structured one-on-one interviews and two focus groups were conducted.

The researcher contacted faculty members at the satellite campus who are designated as College Representatives (CR) to inform them of the study and obtain consent. Originally, the researcher planned to conduct a focus group with these faculty advisors. Eleven faculty advisers were contacted. Due to availability of participants, it was not possible to arrange a time for a focus group. Also, many of the CRs did not respond to the researcher's request for participation. As a result, the researcher arranged one on one interviews with those who responded. Five faculty advisors agreed to participate. Two of them were College Representatives for Main Campus colleges who also advise students in four-year programs that can be completed at the satellite campus. Two faculty members who only advised students in four-year programs at the satellite

campus were also interviewed. One faculty member advised only students who attend the satellite campus for two years and plan to complete their degrees at Main Campus.

Three administrators at the satellite campus were interviewed: the Campus Dean, the Associate Dean of Academics, and the Associate Dean of Admissions. The Campus Dean is the leader of the campus. The Associate Dean of Academics is a former faculty member who still serves as an academic advisor and a College Representative for a Main Campus college. The Associate Dean of Admissions oversees admissions and financial aid.

Additionally, several professional staff members and one support staff member participated in one on one interviews. The professional staff participants were the Registrar, Director of Financial Aid, and the Director of Advising. The support staff member serves both the Registrar and the Director of Advising.

Finding students to participate in a focus group at the satellite campus was a challenging process. In order to maximize variability of students, the researcher obtained a list of 200 randomly selected students from the Campus Registrar, who were subsequently contacted by email. Only one student responded, and he was ultimately unable to participate. As a result of this, students were recruited via social media and soliciting participation from students in the campus dining hall; four students participated. Two students were advised by faculty who only advise students who plan on completing their degrees at Main Campus. One student was advised by a professional advisor. Finally, one was advised by a faculty member who teaches in the satellite campus four-year program in which the student was enrolled.

During the course of the data collection process, the researcher learned of a campus committee that was formed to help increase retention rates. Participants suggested the people from this committee would be strong data sources for this study. Staff from throughout the campus served on this committee, and they all interacted with the academic advising system due to the nature of their work. Staff from the offices of Residence Life, Financial Aid, Athletics, Bursar, Learning Support, and the Director of Advising were all present for the focus group.

At Main Campus, the researcher contacted three current administrators and one retired administrator to explain the study and invite them to participate. The current and retired Undergraduate Advising Deans were interviewed. One Associate Undergraduate Advising Dean and the Administrative Director of the School of General Studies, which oversees all of the satellite campus, were also interviewed.

For Phase 2, all interviews were recorded with a digital audio recording device. A transcription service transcribed the audio recordings. Using Nvivo, all interview data were coded using a two-step process. During the first step, the researcher coded data to correspond to the research questions for this study. Secondly, open coding was used to identify themes and subthemes within the data. The themes were categorized and consolidated into hierarchies.

Next, all interviews were classified by type, a) advisors, b) Main Campus administrators, c) non-advising staff at the satellite campus, d) satellite campus administrators. The data were then cross-analyzed to find similarities and differences among the themes that emerged from each group.

In order to identify the stated objectives and policies related to academic advising, the researcher read, summarized, and paraphrased these policies to protect the identity of the institution. This was then compared to the data collected from the interviews and focus groups to identify similarities and differences between data from the participants and the way that advising is defined in policy.

Interview Questions

The interview questions for this study, adapted with permission from Musser (2006) (See Appendix A), are based on systems theory as recommended by Hutchins (1996) and Checkland (1981). Musser's questions were adapted in order to develop consistency in the way that systems inquiry is conducted in the investigation of academic advising. A matrix of the research questions, adapted from Musser (2006) with permission, is included in the appendices.

Reliability and Validity

In positivist research, reliability is the measure by which researchers can determine whether a study, when repeated, would yield the same results. According to Merriam, "reliability in the traditional sense seems to be something of a misfit when applied to qualitative research… That is, rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, one wishes to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable" (Merriam, 1988, p. 170). Since the purpose of qualitative research is to "describe and explain the world as those in the world interpret it" and "reliability and validity are inextricably linked" qualitative researchers can establish reliability by establishing internal validity (Merriam, 1988, p. 171). In qualitative research, there are several methods by which one can establish internal

validity. In this study, the researcher established internal validity using data triangulation and member checking.

The term triangulation comes from surveying, where the surveyor uses two fixed points of a triangle in order to plot the location of the third point. Similarly, qualitative researchers can come to a deep understanding of a phenomenon by collecting data about it from multiple sources. In this study, the researcher collected data from three separate sources: 1) semi-structured interviews with staff and administrators 2) focus groups with students and staff 3) content analysis of documents such as university advising policies and procedures.

In addition to triangulation, the researcher employed member checking to increase validity. The method of member checking attempts to confirm the researcher's interpretations with those from whom the data were gathered. Member checking can help to clarify meaning and minimize misunderstandings between the researcher and the participant. The researcher engaged in ongoing member checking throughout the data collection phase of the study as recommended by Merriam (1988).

In terms of establishing reliability for case study designs, the key issue is ensuring that another researcher could perform the same case study and yield similar results. The primary concern here is that errors and biases should be minimized (Yin, 2003). Yin also asserts that carefully documenting the procedures and developing a "case study protocol" can attenuate concerns about a case study's reliability. This study is influenced by Musser's and utilized a similar protocol, which is addressed in the *Interview Questions* section of this chapter.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis in descriptive case study research is simultaneous and ongoing. That is, the data collection phase and data analysis occur at the same time and build on each other. During the course of data collection and analysis, it is not uncommon to refine research questions and change data collection strategies during the study as data emerge. The research questions for this study did not need to be refined.

According to Yin (2009), there are four strategies employed in analyzing case study data. The most appropriate strategy for this study is "developing a case description" whereby the researcher describes the findings within the context of a specific theoretical framework. Yin advocated for this approach when "the original and explicit purpose of the case study [is] a descriptive one" (Yin, p. 131). In this study, the researcher analyzed and described the data collected using concepts of systems theory.

The author then situated the categories into the components of Hutchin's framework for systems theory to 1) describe what the advising system consists of 2) how the components of the system interact 3) whether the system is broken and why it is working or not working 4) how the system is functioning in practice compared to what is supposed to happen according to the data collected from archival documents. As cited above, this type of case study is best executed when the data are analyzed within a specific theoretical framework. Hutchins' framework for analyzing systems was particularly helpful in describing this specific case.

Summary

This chapter explained the research design used in this study. It is a descriptive case study, the product of which is a thick, rich description of a case. The case that was

investigated was the advising system at a large, multi-campus university. The data were collected primarily at a satellite campus to learn how advising functions there in the context of systems theory.

This qualitative study is situated within the constructivist research paradigm. The constructivist paradigm rests on philosophical and methodological assumptions that are different than those of traditional scientific research. In the constructivist paradigm, reality and knowledge are viewed as subjective, and research methodologies are meant to produce results that are hermeneutical, or descriptive of a phenomenon. Multiple research methodologies can be utilized within the constructivist paradigm. This study is a qualitative case study.

Qualitative case studies may take many forms. This study is descriptive. Descriptive case studies are meant to provide a rich, thick descriptions of phenomena. The case investigated in this study is the advising system at Mid-Atlantic University. In particular, the researcher investigated the way that the system functions at a satellite campus.

Data were collected from documents, focus groups, and interviews. The documents to be studied are those that establish the mission, goals, values, policies, and procedures that drive academic advising at MAU. The investigator interviewed staff and administrators at the Main Campus in order to get a sense of their perception of the way advising ought to be practiced. At the satellite campus, the researcher interviewed and conducted focus groups with academic advisors (faculty and professional), staff, and administrators in order to understand their perceptions of the purposes and functions of

advising and how it is practiced on the campus. Internal validity was established by data triangulation using the sources named above.

The result of this study is a description of the advising system viewed through the lens of systems theory. Using this framework illustrates the way the system functions, its purposes at the satellite campus, and how it differs from the ideals espoused by the university.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the functions, purposes, and identity of a university advising system comparing the ideals espoused by advisors and administrators to actual practice at a satellite campus of Mid-Atlantic University (MAU). The research questions were:

1. How do administrators, faculty, students, and staff perceive purposes and functions of the advising system at a specific university?
2. Are there discrepancies between the espoused objectives, policies, procedures and processes related to advising and how they are enacted on a satellite campus of a large, multi-campus university?
3. From a systems perspective, how does academic advising function on the satellite campus?

The data collected in this study suggest that there are discrepancies between the way that the advising system at MAU is designed to work and the way in which it actually functions. The perceptions of faculty, students, staff, and administrators indicate that there is misunderstanding throughout the campus community as to the purposes and function of academic advising. The sole professional advisor at the satellite campus and advising administrators at Main Campus have a shared understanding of the purposes of advising. They also have a shared understanding of the way that the advising system is designed to function and acknowledge that the system does not function the way it is supposed to.

This chapter first outlines the historical context of academic advising at MAU, which provides the reader with an understanding of the way that the academic advising system originated and evolved at the university. Secondly, academic advising policies are stated to establish the university's espoused goals and objectives for academic advising. Thirdly, the structure of advising at Main Campus, the satellite campus, and the relationship between them are presented. This is followed by a discussion of the way the system functions. Finally, the participants' perceptions of the purposes of advising are presented.

History of Advising at Mid-Atlantic University

In order to understand a system, it is important to consider its historical context (Checkland, 1981; Hutchins, 1996). The retired University Advising Dean (UAD) served Mid-Atlantic University as an academic advisor and advising administrator for over 30 years. He provided the vast majority of the information about the history of advising at MAU, which is primarily oral history. Some of the information in this section was gathered from various publically available MAU websites. Specifics are not given to preserve confidentiality. All of the quotes in this section are attributed to the retired UAD unless otherwise noted.

The history of academic advising at MAU is intertwined with the history of academic advising nationally. As a result of the G.I. Bill, hundreds of World War II veterans enrolled at the university. War scarred and battle hardened, many of the veterans had difficulty adjusting to university life. To address this issue, the university created a small office to address the psychological needs of veterans, which was staffed by Veterans Counselors. Among those needs were academic performance issues; they

had difficulty succeeding in college courses. The Veterans Counselors "actually did some advising with those students who came in and wanted to be engineers, but couldn't handle it." As a result, they needed to make other choices with regard to their academic future.

As time went on, university administrators began to realize that students other than veterans were having psychological issues. As a result, in the mid-1960s the small veterans center was dissolved and a larger counseling center was created. In addition to helping students with personal problems, this new, larger counseling center became a home for students who had not decided on a major. According to the retired University Advising Dean:

> What was unique about MAU at that point was [that] people at MAU realized that there was such a thing as an undecided student, or a student in transition. They had those, too. And that they needed some kind of a systematic intervention, if you will. At that point, the people who were coming up with that, they were also colleges themselves. So they thought, and I jokingly say that oh being undecided had sort of a psychological malady. You were a little off if you couldn't make a decision. So, what did you need? You needed a counselor. And so you got seen in the counseling center and you were actually enrolled, instead of Liberal Arts or Science and Business and all those schools we had, you enrolled in the counseling center.

This counseling center, in effect, functioned as a college that did not confer degrees. The popularity of this novel unit of enrollment soared, as did the caseloads of the psychologists who staffed it.

Eventually, two issues emerged. Because of the stigma that mental health carried in the 1960s, the undecided students did not want to be associated with people who had psychological problems. So too, the psychologists who staffed the counseling center began to develop preferences as to the types of students with whom they wanted to work. The retired UAD referred to this as "a rift in the staff." What began to happen is that one group of psychologists worked with the undecided students while the others worked with students who had personal problems. This is when the university began to refer to the duties of the staff that worked with undecided students as 'academic advising.' Those who identified as academic advisors eventually became the first group of professional academic advisors at the university. According to university records and the retired UAD, in 1973 the MAU Faculty Congress passed legislation that created the Advising College, which was staffed by the former counseling center psychologists now serving the function of academic advisors.

As reported by the of the administrators at Main Campus, the new Advising College (AC) was an enormous shift not only in terms of the new focus on academic advising, but also politically. The counseling center was housed in the division of student affairs, and the new Advising College was moved to academic affairs. According to the retired UAD, "that was a huge move because student affairs lost a whole component, which, I think, to this day, they still don't like that it happened, to a certain extent." There was discussion of appointing the academic advisors as tenure track faculty, but the advisors resisted. They were trained as psychological counselors, not academics. They did not want to be required to publish. According to the former Advising Dean, who is regarded by the participants who are long-time employees of the university as the

primary architect of the university's advising system, there was a national trend of specialization in student affairs functional areas. Academic advising was one of those specializations. Scholarship in the field of advising was non-existent which may have contributed to the academic advisors skittishness about publishing. According to the retired UAD:

> Nationally, again, academic advising being spun off typically although not exclusively, but being spun off from some kind of a counseling component. I'm trying to think of the first year. The first conference on advising was probably about 1978. So it really wasn't many years after '73 when AC formed that you had a national movement on academic advising. When we started we had no colleagues. We had no place to look for models. We sort of did what we did.

The creation of the AC and its move to Academic Affairs had a ripple effect throughout the entire university. AC advisors were eventually "stationed" at each college at Main Campus (e.g. College of Science and College of Business), to act as professional advisors for students in those colleges and to bring information back to the other AC advisors. The AC advisors became fully integrated into their assigned colleges. They knew the faculty and their research interests as well as the students. This structure allowed the AC to become a valuable source of advising information throughout the university. According to one Main Campus advising administrator, "the idea was to have somebody who understood academic advising out in the college to be an advocate for good advising there and then also to be the conduit back for the curricular information and other things that a generalist would need to know in order to help students discover that college."

The AC expanded at the campuses as well. Each campus was required to employ an AC advisor. Like Main Campus, advising at the satellite campuses spun off from counseling services. However, the satellite campuses usually had only one counselor who was then forced to become an academic advisor. This is in contrast with Main Campus where the counselors who became advisors self-selected. Some of the counselors and administrators at the campuses were not supportive of this decision but were forced to comply. Despite this mandate, close-knit relationships formed among AC advisors system-wide. The advising community fostered an environment of collegiality and established a network of advisors known for their ability to provide accurate information.

Three of the participants were employed at the university at this time. They spoke very fondly of the relationships they had with their colleagues and how well the advising system functioned at that time. According to them, the system functioned beautifully for decades. As one participant explained, "Really it was a team. Very team oriented. All student centered because making you a better advisor was all about helping a student. You were just engaged… you had a lot of friends throughout the university." Over time though, the university changed. As one participant put it "It fell apart." The next sections explain the details of the structure of academic advising at Main Campus, the satellite campus studied, and the way they interact with each other. The eventual unraveling of the system and reported causes are explained in the context of the structure. But first, the university-wide academic policy is explained to establish the espoused goals and objectives of the advising system at MAU.

University Academic Advising Policy

The university-wide academic advising policy at MAU was passed by their Faculty Congress in the 1970s and has been revised several times since then. The following is an exposition of the four-section policy written by the Faculty Congress. It has been paraphrased from the written advising policy, which is publically available on a website, to protect the identity of the university.

Section One of the current policy states that the purposes of academic advising are to:

- Help students to set and achieve academic goals
- Promote intellectual development and learning in and out of the classroom
- Encourage independent learning and academic decisions

Section Two of the policy created an Academic Advising Board (AAB) that is responsible for overseeing academic advising at the university. The Vice President of Undergraduate Studies appoints this board, which consists of students, administrators, Faculty Congress members, academic advisors, and various *ex officio* members. The policy grants the AAB authority to 1) help all academic divisions provide high quality academic advising 2) guide adherence to academic advising policies and 3) assess the university-wide advising system.

Section Three of the university-wide advising policy mandates that each academic division create its own academic advising program which contains the following elements:

- A policy that states the philosophy of advising so that students know what the advising program provides
- An established organizational structure for providing advising

- The delivery of advising information and computer based infrastructure for communication and delivery of resources
- Training and development for academic advisors
- Tailor academic advising for the specific needs of students in a given division
- All newly admitted students (new admits and transfer) should meet with an advisor
- Parameters for determining advising load and regularity of advising consultation
- A program for rewarding advising
- An assessment program

The fourth section of the policy outlines the responsibilities shouldered by advisors as well as students. It is the responsibility of each academic unit to ensure that all students are assigned to an academic advisor. Advisors are responsible for helping students to:

- Get the most out of their education
- Achieve their educational objectives
- Understand policies, procedures, and their academic progress
- Become fully engaged in their educational endeavors
- Develop a wont of learning
- Fully participate in learning opportunities inside and outside of the classroom

The advising policy, available on an MAU website, also states that students are responsible for understanding and completing their degree requirements and scheduling the correct courses to complete their degrees in accordance with their graduation timeline.

Structure of Advising

The advising policy described above sketches out a structure for the advising system. This section illustrates three components of the system under study. First, the structure at Main Campus is addressed, followed by the satellite campus and finally the relationship between the Main Campus and the satellite campus.

Structure of Advising at Main Campus

Central to the structure of academic advising at MAU is the position of University Advising Dean (UAD). The University Advising Dean serves on several key committees that greatly influence academic policy and procedure. The current and former holders of this position were interviewed for this study and they both reported similar information regarding their roles as the UAD. The person in this position manages the AC, which employs over twenty professional academic advisors.

Within the AC, there several levels of professional academic advisors. Like faculty, advisors can be promoted to higher levels based on experience and good work. According to the MAU human resources website, there are five levels of positions with the title 'academic advisor.' According to the AC website, the AC advisors are responsible for advising students enrolled in the AC. Some of the AC advisors also serve in administrative roles largely related to building relationships and communicating with the other academic units at Main Campus in addition to advising students, as reported by

participants who are advising administrators. As explained by one of the advising administrators at Main Campus, one of these roles is the Associate Dean of the Advising College who is responsible for outreach to the Advising Directors at each of the satellite campuses. While the satellite campus Advising Directors are advisors for students enrolled in AC, the administrators in AC at Main Campus have no direct authority over the Advising Directors at the satellite campus. As stated by one Main Campus administrator "there is no positional authority." This will be further explained in the section below that covers the relationship between Main Campus and the satellite campus under study.

The UAD reported that he is the administrator in charge of all of the operations of AC, including supervising all professional advisors in AC. The person in this position also serves on several influential, high-level committees. He reports directly to the Vice President of Undergraduate Studies who is the executive in charge of all aspects of undergraduate education at the university. Figure 2 illustrates the committees that are relevant to academic advising at MAU. Double arrows represent information flow, and single arrows represent reporting structure. This figure was constructed based on information garnered from the UAD, two other administrators at Main Campus, as well as various MAU websites.

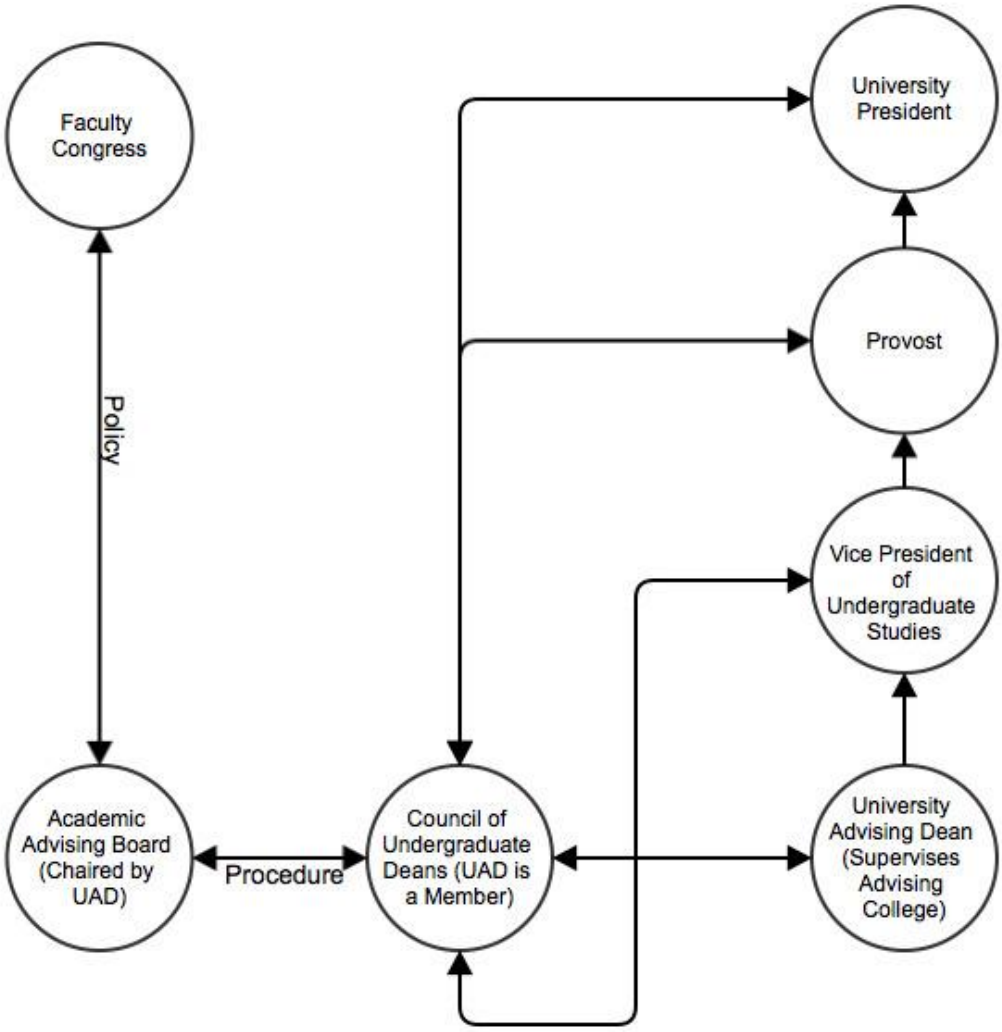

Figure 2. Advising structure at main campus.

Central to the oversight of advising, the UAD chairs the Academic Advising Board (AAB). According to the Faculty Congress policy and the AAB website, the AAB is sanctioned by the Faculty Congress to oversee Academic Advising across the university. Although the Faculty Congress policy that created and defines the role of the AAB uses the word "Authority" in the policy, the AAB does not have the power to create policy or procedure, nor does it have any authority over any employees at the university, according to advising administrators at Main Campus. It fundamentally acts as an

advisory committee that vets proposed Faculty Congress legislation as well as policies and procedures proposed by other groups that could affect advising. The AAB is highly regarded, and their recommendations regarding policy and procedure are taken seriously. Policy and procedure making bodies understand the importance of advising and consistently ask for input from the AAB before creating and implementing new rules. While the Faculty Congress authors policy, those policies need to be operationalized by various units across the university. With regard to undergraduate academic policy, the primary unit responsible for operationalizing those policies and creating and enforcing accompanying procedures is the Council of Deans (COD).

According to the COD website, the COD serves as an advisory board for the University President, Provost, the Vice President of Undergraduate Studies, and various other executives not directly related to advising. The COD has a wide scope of responsibility for undergraduate education and has the authority to create enforceable procedures. This is a very powerful committee on which the UAD serves. Although the COD does not have direct authority over any personnel, those who serve on the COD do. Moreover, since the COD advises the President, the Provost, and several other executives, the procedures and recommendations of the COD are often communicated by those at the highest levels.

Structure at Satellite Campus

The satellite campus organizational structure is much simpler than that of Main Campus due to its smaller size. Figure 3 illustrates the reporting lines of staff with responsibilities related to academic advising, which include the Campus Dean, the Associate Dean for Academics, the Director of Advising, and the faculty (many of whom

serve as advisors). The Campus Dean (CD) is the executive in charge of all operations of the campus. This person is responsible for strategic decisions, fund raising, community relationships, and general oversight of the campus. The CD was interviewed for this study. In terms of academic advising, the CD reports that he has very little direct influence. Since the Director of Advising and all faculty report to the Associate Dean for Academics, he is not very involved with what happens in advising. With regard to advising, he stated that he occasionally encourages faculty advisors "in a passing comment now and then." He believes that advising is a very important component of undergraduate education, especially with regard to retention.

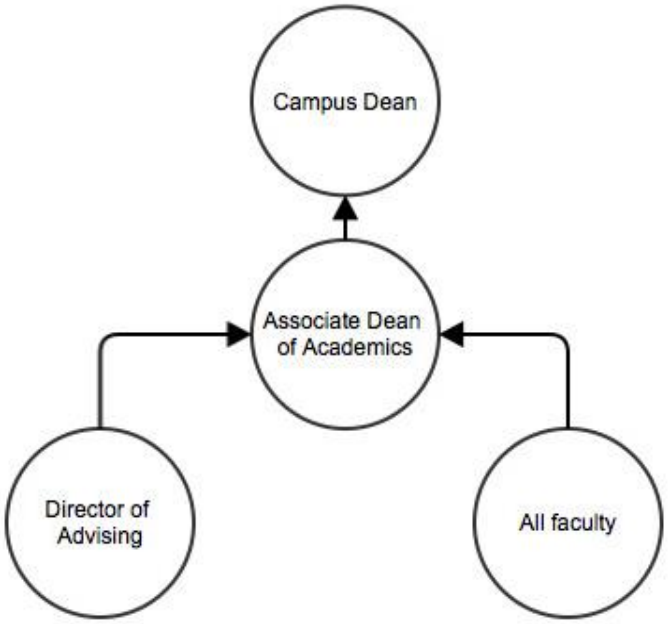

Figure 3. Advising structure at satellite campus.

The Associate Dean for Academics (ADA) reports directly to the Campus Dean. The person in this position has worked at the campus for decades, beginning as a faculty member who did a great deal of advising. The ADA reported that she enjoys advising so much that she still serves as an academic advisor for students in her academic discipline.

The ADA functions not only as the supervisor and hiring manger of all faculty, the Registrar, and the Director of Advising (DA), but also as the chief academic officer of the campus. In that role, she is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the academic quality of the campus meets MAU's standards. She reported that "the largest part of [her] job is hiring and evaluating faculty." She is also responsible for "bringing academic programs to campus" and actually developed the programs that the campus currently offers. In addition, she is responsible for academic support services such as advising and the Registrar's Office. Since the ADA has positional power over faculty and the Director of Advising, she is ultimately the administrator who has the most power to influence academic advising. The Director of Advising (DA) is the sole professional academic advisor on the campus. The role of this position is multi-faceted and complex.

The Director of Advising is the satellite campus representative of the Advising College (AC) and is therefore responsible for ensuring that all AC policies and procedures are implemented and enforced. She is also charged with providing training and professional development for all faculty advisors on campus and is viewed as the "guru" of advising, as one participant stated. All of the faculty advisors interviewed for this study confirmed this finding noting that they refer complicated advising issues to the Director of Advising. The DA also has a significant advising roster, consisting of all students enrolled in AC and Conditionally Admitted students, which is a special program designed for underprepared students who show potential for success.

Additionally, the Director of Advising is responsible for assigning students to faculty academic advisors. Since the majority of students (i.e. non AC and Conditionally Admitted students) are assigned to faculty advisors this is a significant dimension of

advising administration. The importance of faculty advisor assignments cannot be overstated; these assignments ultimately determine the experience that the vast majority of students will have with academic advising. Students are assigned to advisors primarily based on 1) the campus where they plan to complete their degree (i.e. the satellite campus, Main Campus, or one of several other satellite campuses) and 2) their college of enrollment.

The satellite campus offers both Bachelor's and Associate's degrees that can be completed at the campus. According to various university websites, students are also able to complete the course requirements for the first two years of over 150 majors that can be completed at over 20 other campuses. Students who plan to complete a degree at the satellite campus are assigned to faculty advisors in the respective programs. Students who plan to finish majors at other campuses are assigned to other faculty advisors who teach in various disciplines. Since the campus is so small, it is impossible have advisors who are specialists in each major. The Advising Director and ADA are careful to assign students to faculty advisors who have general knowledge in an academic area. For example, one of the participants interviewed is a biology professor who advises students interested in various scientific disciplines including but not limited to those based on biological sciences.

In addition to the roles specified above that are formally related to advising, there are several other offices that interact with advising on a regular basis. Participants from the following offices were interviewed to help gather information from non-advising staff regarding their perceptions of advising, which is one of the research questions of this study.

- Admissions
- Financial Aid
- Registrar
- Bursar
- Residence Life
- Learning Support/Disabled Student Services

Participants from each of these offices were interviewed in order gain an understanding of the way that they perceive and interact with academic advising at the campus. All offices reported that they primarily interact with the advising system via referrals to professional and faculty advisors. The referrals they make are typically associated with course requirements, complex policy questions, and consultation about major choice.

Relationship Between Main Campus and Satellite Campus

The satellite campus is administratively housed in the Department of Satellite Campuses (DSC). At the helm of the DSC is an administrator at the Vice President level who holds a dual title, Vice President of Satellite Campuses and Dean of the School of General Studies (SGS). The SGS is the college that houses degree programs offered by many of the satellite campuses. The campus being studied offers degrees that are conferred by the SGS. As the VP, this position is the chief administrator of the entire system of Satellite Campuses.

The campus being studied interacts with the DSC through its central office at Main Campus. The central office is responsible for operationalizing the academic administration of the degree programs offered by SGS and is the primary contact for academic advisors who advise students in those programs.

Not only can students at the satellite campuses complete majors offered by SGS at those campuses, they can also take the courses required for the first two years of majors offered at Main Campus. According to Faculty Congress policy, each college at Main Campus is required to designate an Outreach Contact who is responsible for communicating information to the satellite campuses. The Director of Advising at the satellite campus notes that "the [satellite] campus has College Representatives (CR) and they are to be the contact person and the campus expert for advising for that place and at Main Campus there's supposed to be somebody there who is in charge of reaching out to all the campuses and that's supposed to be how the system functions." According the satellite campus Director of Advising, some faculty advise students in the majors offered at the campus as well as students who plan on completing their degrees at Main Campus. Similarly, the satellite campus Director of Advising is the campus representative for the Advising College.

The structure of the academic advising system with regard to the relationship between Main Campus and the satellite campuses was developed before the SGS was created. According to the participants who worked at the university at that time, the system worked very well. A theme that emerged related to this structure is the importance of communication between advisors at Main Campus and those at the satellite campus. When the structure was first designed, the Internet did not exist. Information was communicated via paper documents as well as personal conversations between advisors. A minimum of once per year, each college at Main Campus held meetings to discuss academic advising. All of the satellite campus advisors (who were faculty members) would travel to Main Campus where they would network with their colleagues

and discuss changes to the curriculum that would affect advising. They would also discuss their research which enabled advisors to provide better information to students about course content, potential undergraduate research opportunities, and other specific information gathered by having personal relationships with their colleagues. These satellite campus faculty members were tenured in Main Campus colleges, so they naturally developed strong bonds with their colleagues. According to the satellite campus Director of Advising, “It was beautiful.”

The Advising College (AC), comprised of professional advisors, had similar meetings up to three times per year. According to a Main Campus administrator who used to work at a satellite campus as an AC advisor, “We came up to Main Campus in the fall for two days, in the spring for two days, and then we had a winter retreat.” The participants reported that they were both well informed about advising issues in their respective colleges and well acquainted with their colleagues across the university. As one participant put it, “really, it was a team.” The figure below illustrates the advising structure at that time.

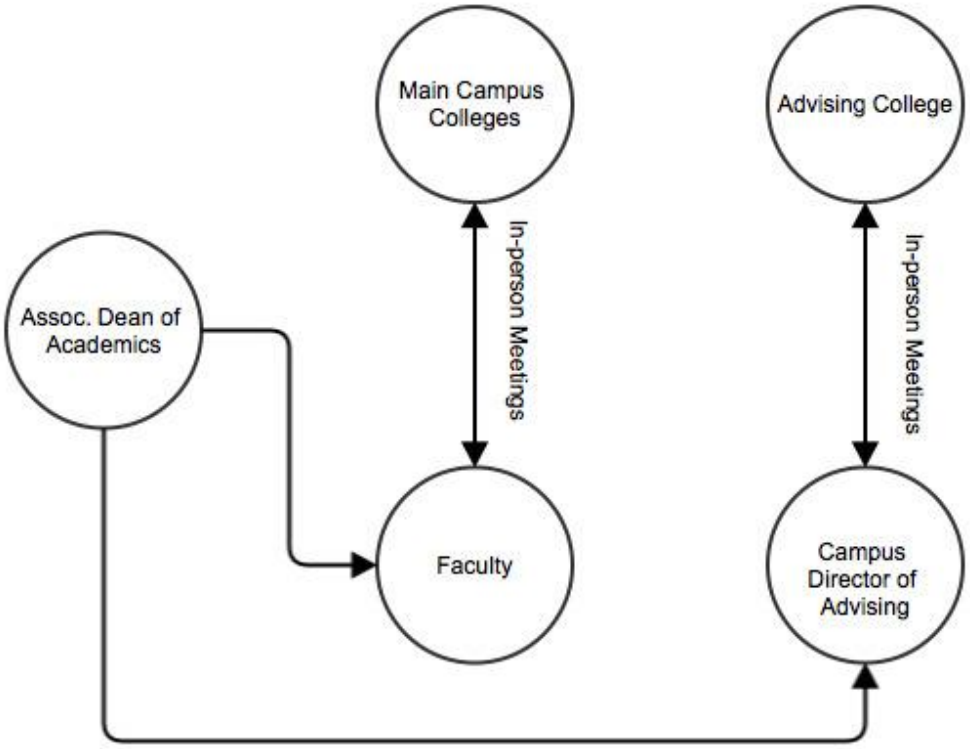

Figure 4. Relationship between main campus and satellite campus pre reorganization.

In the late 1990s, two dynamics changed that greatly affected academic advising: a reorganization of the satellite campuses and the increasing use of the Internet to distribute information. The campuses were restructured due to the creation of the School of General Studies (SGS), which allowed the satellite campuses to offer four-year degrees. The SGS is the college that confers the Baccalaureate degrees at the satellite campus. Before the SGS was created, all of the students enrolled at the satellite campuses were either pursuing two-year degrees that could be completed at the campus or four year degrees to be completed at Main Campus. When the campus began to offer four-year programs, the faculty who were hired to teach in those programs were tenured at the School of General Studies whereas the established faculty were tenured in the Main

Campus colleges. As a result, the newer faculty did not have the opportunity develop the relationships with other faculty at Main Campus to the extent that the established faculty did. According the Associate Dean of Academics at the Satellite campus, "Main Campus used to hire the faculty at the satellite campuses. They don't hire now. Because of this, the Main Campus faculty have no vested interest… the collegiality of putting a name to a face is completely erased." The satellite Campus Dean concurred, "prior to the reorganization, pretty much all students planned to complete their degrees at Main Campus. So, main campus probably had more ownership." Figure 5 illustrates the advising system after the creation of SGS.

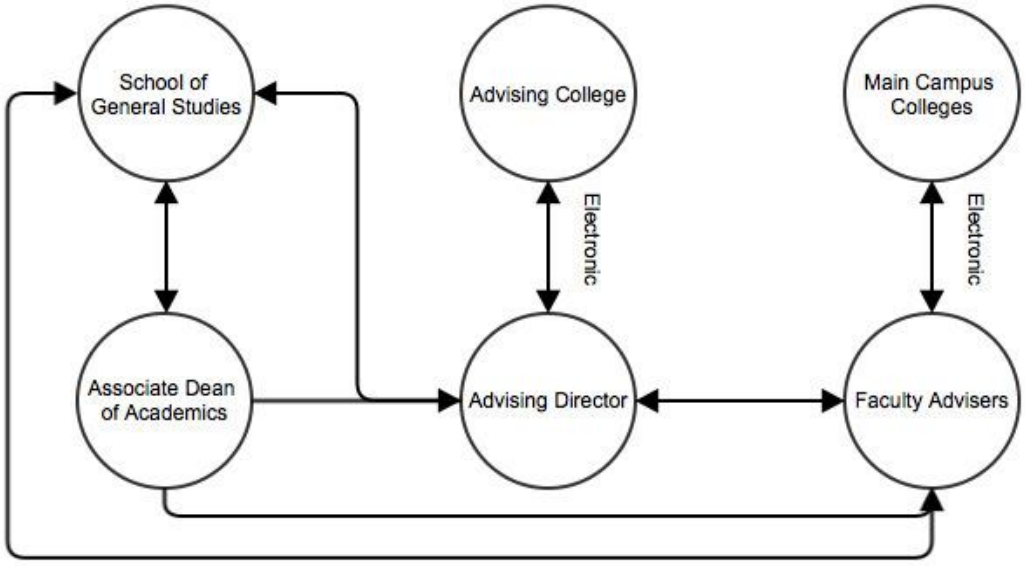

Figure 5. Relationship between main campus and satellite campus post reorganization.

As faculty members retired, some were replaced by non-tenure track instructors or adjunct instructors. The tenure track faculty who were hired were subsequently tenured in the new School of General Studies rather than Main Campus Colleges whether or not they were hired to teach in the majors offered by SGS. However, these faculty members

were often required to advise students who planned to complete majors at Main Campus. Some of them were also appointed as the Campus Representative for Main Campus.

Since these new faculty were not tenured in the colleges they were asked to represent at the satellite campus, they did not develop the close relationships with the faculty and staff at Main Campus that the older faculty did. Around the same time, colleges began communicating academic advising information via email and web sites rather than in print form and personal conversations. Moreover, the annual in-person meetings occurred less frequently. Some colleges stopped offering them entirely. Participants reported that there is presently an inconsistency among the colleges. Some of the colleges have done an excellent job of building relationships with the campuses, while some put very little effort into doing so. According to the campus Advising Director:

> The advising coordinators for the 4-year programs [at the satellite campus], they know their purpose. They know why they're the advising coordinators. They know that there's no meetings and curriculum and reviews *(sic)* and they know they're the leaders in the advising and there's almost like a department sense. But, in those 2 plus 2 models, the communication and the breakdown sometimes from Main Campus, that's...it's a little fuzzy.

These two factors, the change in the tenure home of the faculty and the changes in the way information was communicated, eroded the function of the advising system. The official structure remains the same, but it is no longer functioning the way it was designed. While the faculty members who teach and advise in the campus's four-year

programs have a vested interest in advising students well, those who are assigned to advise Main Campus bound students do not have the same incentives.

Advising System Functionality, Student Perceptions of Advising and Discrepancies Between Policy and Practice

Due to the inconsistency of communication and breakdown of personal relationships between Main Campus and advisors at the satellite campus, the advising system functions differently from its intended design. The satellite Campus Dean stated "there has been less of a connection with Main Campus in regards to advising than there was 15 years ago." A faculty member at the satellite campus stated that his college "doesn't even meet anymore", while the Associate Dean of Academics noted that some Main Campus Colleges have meetings and others do not. These issues, coupled with demands on faculty time, greatly affect the quality of advising at the satellite campus. Each class of participant (students, advisors, and administrators) reported that there are significant problems with the advising system and that those problems contribute to the quality of advising that students receive.

Of the four students who participated in the focus group, three were planning to finish their degrees at main campus, and one planned to complete his degree at the satellite campus. These students also worked with different types of advisers. One student was advised by the Director of Advising. One planned to finish his degree at the satellite campus and was therefore advised by a faculty member who teaches in that program. Two students were advised by faculty responsible for advising students planning to complete their degrees at main campus. These students were enrolled in different majors and therefore had different advisers.

The student who was advised by the Director of Advising was very vocal about the high quality of advising she received. She felt that her adviser was very helpful in a number of ways including interpretation of academic policy, understanding the student's strengths, and suggesting courses to help enhance her education. The student who was enrolled in the satellite campus program had a similar experience. He stated, "I don't think I've asked a question that she didn't…she wasn't able to find the answer or give me the right direction or anything like that."

One of the students who planned to complete at main campus had a very different experience and was unhappy with his interaction with his assigned adviser. He explained his experience thusly, "I haven't had much advising experience. Recently I had to drop a class and add another one, but my advisor had like zero answers. I e-mailed her and she was just like, I don't know what to do. Go talk to this person and that was pretty much the base of my advising."

The second student who planned to complete at main campus had a better experience. His adviser was also an instructor of courses he had taken and therefore had a greater opportunity to establish a relationship with his adviser. He stated that he just "goes in and talks to him" and that his adviser is "pretty helpful."

Several factors contribute to the problems with advising. First, academic advisors at the satellite campus receive very little training. They reported that they meet with the advising director for one-on-one training. This training is primarily focused on "nuts and bolts" of advising, in the words of one faculty advisor, such as degree requirements and locating electronic resources. They are not educated about the university's philosophy, values, or objectives of advising. The satellite Campus Dean summarized his comments

about advisor training as "MAU has very low formal training for advisors." The Director of Advising, who is the only professional advisor on satellite campus, described her training as "baptism by fire. There was no training for me. Day One was in the trenches. I had no training."

Secondly, the quality of academic advising is not officially assessed or evaluated either at the individual or programmatic level. According to the satellite Campus Dean, evaluation is "word of mouth back from the students about which faculty do a really good job with advising." Two themes that emerged regarding this dynamic were "good advising equals more advising" and "the system enables the weak to avoid advising". Students get to know which advisors are strong and which are not. Even staff, faculty, and administrators know who the strong and weak advisors are, and they often refer students to the "good" advisors if they are having trouble with their assigned advisor – especially when they know that a particular advisor is known for being unhelpful. As one advisor stated, "hopefully the powers that be hear whether you do a good job or a bad job". In turn, the advisors who are perceived as strong end up doing more advising while those who are perceived as weak do less.

Although academic advising is considered as a part of teaching in the promotion and tenure (P&T) process, it is not evaluated or rewarded. The way advising is incorporated into faculty annual reviews and the P&T process is simply based on how many advisees are assigned to the faculty member. According to the Associate Dean of Academics, to whom all advisors report:

> Ok, you have 20 students officially listed as your advisees. So, [I ask faculty during their evaluations] can you give me a sense of how many [students] you

> personally see? So I try to get a gauge just in terms of encounters. I want to believe every encounter's been a good one. I mean, I think you've got to give them some credit and I give them credit until I have a student come and tell me, you know, mistakes were made. Then we dig deeper. I mean, you learn both sides of it at that point because neither side tells you the full picture. But the only way I can evaluate it honestly is that I rely on the Director of Advising to tell me, are kids complaining? Because they go to her [to complain about other advisors]. And I get some feedback from her. Am I really measuring it? No. I'm just making sure there's [advising] activity and with activity I have to assume there's some good [advising] going on. I could be wrong.

This dynamic was confirmed by the faculty advisors as well as the Campus Dean. In addition, the advising administrators at Main Campus lamented that advising is not formally assessed there either. When asked how advising is assessed or evaluated, two Main Campus administrators communicated frustration. With an exasperated facial expression, one administrator stated bluntly, "I have no idea."

Administrators suggested that advising ought to be evaluated at the programmatic and individual levels, but there is general agreement that assessing advising in a meaningful way is difficult. The retired Undergraduate Advising Dean stated, "higher ed in general has trouble with assessment other than just the facts. We know how to assess facts, but we're not good at assessing things like critical thinking." The Campus Dean expressed similar sentiments. He noted that even "evaluating teaching is difficult enough." While university advising policy states that advising should be assessed, participants noted that no assessment or evaluation takes place.

In addition to the lack of formal assessment, good advising is not rewarded. Faculty are rewarded primarily for the quality of their research, teaching, and service. The only formal recognition of good advising is the Advisor of the Year Award. According to the Campus Dean, students nominate advisors for this award. Winners receive a plaque. Nearly every advisor who participated in this study has received this award. While they are appreciative of it, it is clear that the reward is not an incentive for good advising. As stated above, the students seek help from advisors who are perceived as being strong, so the reward for good advising is more advising.

According to the retired Advising Dean at Main Campus, "You probably have a few faculty who students constantly over and over complain about. And nothing you do is gonna *(sic)* change that because that person probably doesn't want to do that work". The theme "you have to want to do the work" rings true throughout data collected from all advisors and administrators. The advisors interviewed all reported that they enjoy advising and that a significant number of the students they advise are actually assigned to other faculty who are perceived as weak advisors. In short, they are good advisors because they want to be good advisors. The satellite campus Associate Dean of Academics explained it this way, "It's a job you either like or you don't. I think that you have to like to do it, want to do it, and believe that it is the right thing to do. The student is going to understand or feel if you're interested in them, if you care."

Another theme that emerged is that faculty are incentivized to be poor advisors. Since good advising equals more advising, and more advising equals more time and energy, good advising saps time and energy away from research efforts. If an advisor is weak at advising, students leave them alone, and there are not any serious repercussions.

In fact, they are rewarded with more time and energy to devote to research, which is an important part of the P&T process. As one faculty advisor explained, "[If] you are not advising you are [doing less work], and then you have more time to do your research…in some way you're being rewarded because you do not want to advise." Since faculty are required to advise and the evaluation of their advising consists only of the number of students assigned to them, they are getting credit for advising whether they actually advise students or not. Furthermore, the stronger advisors often work with students who are assigned to other advisors. As a result, weak advisors still get credit for advising during their evaluation because they have students officially assigned to them. One advisor noted that she has 70 advisees officially assigned to her but that she advises close to 120 students. Participants at the campus reported that faculty members who are not good advisors are supposed to perform more service, but as a participant explained "I think that worked for a year or two, but then it just went away." The Associate Dean of Academics at the satellite campus confirmed this. Regarding whether the poor advisors whose students see other advisors actually do more service, she reported that she "tries" to ensure it.

Purposes of Advising

A research question of this study is "how do administrators, faculty, students, and staff perceive the purposes and functions of advising?" Systems theory posits that the purposes of a system are defined by its behavior and the way it functions. (Hutchins, 1996). In this study, the academic advising system was examined to develop an understanding of its behavior and thus its purpose at MAU. Several themes emerged regarding the purposes of advising.

While all classifications of participants (students, advisors, administrators and other staff) maintain that "advising is more than scheduling courses", each group had different ideas of what the purposes of advising are. While nuanced, there are important differences in what each group reported and emphasized when asked what the purposes of advising are and the services that advising provides.

Academic advisors and advising administrators had the deepest understanding of academic advising. Their perceptions of the purposes of advising most closely aligned with the university's stated goals as well as those reflected in the advising literature. For example, they spoke frequently about the centrality of advising in a student's educational experience and the ways that advising can help students to make connections between courses and across their curriculum, which are generally associated with a "learning centered" or "developmental" advising model. While faculty advisors, non-advising administrators, and other staff also discussed that "advising is more than scheduling", their views about this became evident only after the researcher asked probing questions. Themes that emerged based on their immediate response were "keeping students on track" to graduate on time, retention, and career advising. All participants were concerned about the low retention rates at the campus. The campus Advising Director stated that "it all comes back to enrollment". The campus's budget is based on total enrollment. Enrollment is down, so there is pressure to increase retention rates.

Professional advisors and advising administrators also discussed the importance of the role of advisors with regard to retention and degree completion, but their responses were nuanced. They spoke of the importance of those issues as well as concerns about student debt with regard to time to completion. But, these were spoken of as byproducts

of good advising rather than the primary purposes of advising. One Main Campus advising administrator put it this way:

> In my view, I think the purpose of academic advising is to facilitate students' planning and executing a meaningful education. And that's it. Underneath that a whole bunch of other very complex things. But fundamentally, it's about students being intentional about their education and being aware of the opportunities and making decisions that mean something to them. That's really it.
>
> I spent a lot of time thinking about what it is we're supposed to be accomplishing, how we change students' lives, how we could, over the long term, by changing individual student's lives have an impact on our higher education institutions, on society and other things like that. I actually think it sounds ridiculous maybe, but I see a connection between what we do with an individual who can say, I learned these things and this is what's important to me and this is why my higher education was valuable. Regardless of the job they have or whatever, if they could say this is why this was valuable. Then they raise kids in a different way. And they make voting decisions in a different way. And we can change the rhetoric of what it is to have an educated citizenry. But, one person at a time. Seeing the meaning in what they did, but it wasn't just jumping through hoops and checking things off a list.

The Director of Advising at the satellite campus has a similar view of academic advising and expressed that the primary purpose of advising is teaching. She emphasized that academic advisors play a key role in helping students to engage in their educational endeavors. While she explicitly stated that the purposes of advising are teaching and

student engagement, as she elaborated on her thoughts, she consistently stated that retention was ultimately a function of academic advising at the campus. The following quotes from the Director of Advising capture this sentiment. 1) "The more engaged we know our students are, the more likely we are to retain them." 2) Whoever they feel that engagement with that they don't necessarily have to be with me to feel that engagement. I think if that engagement from the advisor was effective with every student in that, it would certainly help with retention."

At the conclusion of her thoughts about the purposes of advising on her campus, she admitted that it is about retention. This reflects the position of the non-advising staff and administrators at the satellite campus. While the Director of Advising understands the ideals of advising as professed by policy and advising administrators at Main Campus, the pressures of enrollment and retention at her campus result in advising being viewed primarily as a retention tool.

Similarly, Faculty advisors at the satellite campus discussed the importance of advising with regard to student engagement and helping students make meaning of their curriculum, which is consistent with messages coming from Main Campus advising administrators and advising policy. However, they also placed greater emphasis on advising as a retention tool. One faculty advisor's view encapsulated the sentiments of the others. He views advising as a two-sided coin, one side is "mechanical" while the other is "philosophical". He described the "mechanical side" as being primarily concerned with the timely completion of degree requirements and course scheduling. The "philosophical side" is primarily concerned with helping students make connections between their course selection as related to their academic and career goals, which is

consistent with the university's stated purposes. In the literature on advising, this would be characterized as prescriptive versus developmental or learning centered advising (Crookston, 1972; Hagan & Jordan, 2008; Lowenstein, 2005). Still, the "mechanical side" tends to be the focus of his advising practice. As he stated, "So I think the theoretical and the philosophical stuff is more important, but we don't focus on it."

When asked why he was not able to focus on the philosophical aspect of advising, he stated that students come to advising appointments unprepared. That is, they typically expect the advisor to tell them what they need to take to graduate and to build their course schedules. Furthermore, he noted that in most cases, students not want to have more "philosophical" discussions. Another academic advisor expressed similar concerns and frustrations with the advising process:

> Well, I see advising as to help lead students, but I think students see it as doing it for them. That's something, especially because I have so many advisees that I do get frustrated with. I think a lot of the times the students could do a lot of this on their own and they just need confirmation that they're going about it the right way, but many of the students for whatever reason just come in and expect you to do it for them. That's something I've been working with, trying to give them more ownership over their degree.
>
> For a lot of students it's very mechanical. What are the courses that I need to graduate? Who teaches it? What time is it at? What days are they at? Do I have friends who are in that course? I think for a lot of students that's all that matters to them. In the degree [I advise for] we do have 12 credits of what's called consultation with advisor that are courses, I call it kind of a mini minor, courses

that enhance the degree but aren't required for the degree. I try to get them to consider content. What kind of courses fit together in that picture, but for a lot of students they're just not interested in that.

Because faculty advisors are so busy they do not have the time or energy to turn students away and have them come back once they have prepared. This, coupled with the fact that the students often have little interest in discussing the "philosophical" side of advising, results in advising appointments that almost always focus on the "mechanical" aspects of advising.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the findings of the study. The history of academic advising at MAU was outlined in order to provide context for the study and to show how the advising system was born and developed. The MAU Faculty Congress advising policy was also reported in order to establish the espoused goals and objectives of the advising system. Next, the structure of the academic advising system was illustrated. By explaining the structure at Main Campus, the satellite campus, and the relationship between the two, the complexity of the system was demonstrated.

Academic advising at MAU is a complex system. It was originally designed to establish a network of reliable information across and throughout the university. The system worked remarkably well for decades. As the university grew and changed, the existing advising system began to "fall apart", in the words of a long-time MAU employee.

The function of the academic advising system shows disparities between the espoused ideals and the actual practice of advising. This was demonstrated by outlining

the perceived purposes of advising by administrators, faculty, staff, and students. While there is a shared understanding of some of the goals of academic advising, those that are enacted are primarily prescriptive in nature. Due to several factors, such as a lack of central authority over advising, the changing roles of faculty, and a major reorganization, it is very difficult for learning centered or developmental advising to take place, even though MAU policy encourages it.

In summary, the professional advisors, advising administrators, and faculty advisors who were interviewed enjoy advising and want to be good at it. Faculty who are on the tenure track are required to advise for promotion and tenure, but the quality of advising is not evaluated. This allows those who do not enjoy advising to avoid their advising duties. In turn, students often seek the help of advisors who are perceived as strong. This dynamic leads to a situation where some advisors see excessive numbers of students. Because of this and other competing duties, these advisors do not have the time or energy required to engage in developmental or learning-centered advising. This is complicated by the fact that faculty advisor training is limited to the mechanics of advising. That is, faculty advisors are not educated about theories and philosophies of advising. Although MAU has developed extensive advising policies with the intent of encouraging and defining advising to be a meaningful educative enterprise, the dynamics of the system tend to undermine its intended purposes.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the functions, purposes, and identity of a university advising system comparing the ideals espoused by advisors and administrators to actual practice at a satellite campus of Mid-Atlantic University (MAU). The research questions are:

1. How do administrators, faculty, students, and staff perceive purposes and functions of the advising system at a specific university?
2. Are there discrepancies between the espoused objectives, policies, procedures and processes related to advising and how they are enacted on a satellite campus of a large, multi-campus university?
3. From a systems perspective, how does academic advising function on the satellite campus?

In order to build on the research of Musser (2006), Hutchins' (1996) ten basic principles of systems theory are used here to explain the way that the academic advising system functions on the satellite campus at MAU based on the discussion of the findings in Chapter 4. Hutchins' principles used to provide a structure with which complex systems can be interpreted by using systems theory.

According to Meadows, (2008) a system's behavior defines its identity and functions, not its "rhetoric or stated goals" (p. 14). If the system does not behave as it is purported to do, the purposes of advising, as defined by those who study and work as advisors, then the work that has gone in to developing a distinct identity for advising has limited efficacy. At MAU, the lack of central authority weakens the power of academic

advisors to do little more than tell students what courses to take. While some excellent advising takes place at the satellite campus, according to several participants, it is only due to the fact some advisors value and enjoy the work.

"Principle 1: Each System Must be Considered in its Wholeness, not its Parts"

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p.87)

In Chapter 1, this principle was explained using an analogy of the bass guitar. Each component of the bass (strings, body, and neck) must be considered as a whole in order to understand the instrument. This study examined all of the parts of the advising system that affect advising at the satellite campus that was investigated.

The wholeness of the advising system at MAU, with relation to the satellite campus, was examined in this study by interviewing a wide array of individuals who represented multiple components of the system. Additionally, the advising policy was outlined in order to demonstrate the espoused purposes and goals of the advising system.

At Main Campus, there are several components of the system, as outlined in Chapter 4. Components such as the Academic Advising Board, Council of Deans, and Faculty Congress Policy were rarely mentioned by staff at the satellite campus, yet these components have a strong influence on advising throughout the university. At the satellite campus, the components of the advising system are not only the various administrators and boards at Main Campus but also the administrators and committees at the satellite campus.

At the satellite campus, there is one professional advisor and several faculty advisors. While the professional advisor has the best and deepest understanding of what the advising system is supposed to accomplish, faculty provide the vast majority of

academic advising to students. There are also several non-advising staff members who are involved in the advising system, even though they do not fully realize their influence. Since they refer students to advising and give them information about advising, they are very much a part of the system.

"Principle 2: There is Interconnectedness Among all Systems Within a System"

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p.89)

As discussed in Chapter 2, this principle is similar to Principle 1. The distinction is that principle 2 focuses on the interaction between systems where principle 1 states that all parts of the system have to be considered in order to understand it. The charts and their explanations that were detailed in Chapter 4 illustrate the interconnectedness of the multitude of components of the advising system. Each component influences the system in unique ways.

While all of the academic advisors and campus administrators have direct influence on the quality of academic advising at the satellite campus, they are often unaware of the goals stated in policy, which are meant to drive the advising system. When asked about the power structure of advising (who has the power to make changes), none of the participants at the satellite campus mentioned the Academic Advising Board, Council of Deans, or the Faculty Congress advising policies. They perceived that the power came solely from the administrators at the satellite campus and the academic colleges at Main Campus.

The systems that connect with academic advising at the satellite campus do so primarily through referrals. An interesting dynamic regarding the interconnectedness of these systems with advising is that the non-advising staff who were interviewed vastly

underestimate their connection to advising. The way they speak to students about advising can be very influential on the ways that students perceive it. Referrals set expectations for students, which make the work of advising very difficult for the advisor.

This became apparent in the interview with the campus Director of Advising. While she deeply understands advising policies and best practices, she is unduly influenced by pressure exerted by systems outside of advising. She remarked that at her campus, everything comes back to retention. Retention does not appear in the advising policy. Yet, the Director of Advising sees retention as a priority of the administration, which can influence the way that she advises students.

Faculty advisors experience similar pressures, which are complicated by demands of their positions, which are influenced by other systems. The Promotion and Tenure system (P&T) is heavily weighted toward research and publication. Several faculty who advise are also responsible for administrative duties, helping to recruit new students, and community outreach. These other duties exert tremendous pressure on faculty time and energy.

"Principle 3: A System is More Than the Sum of its Parts"

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p.90)

A system cannot be understood by separating it into its component parts. The essence of this principle is the concept of a system's emergent function, which means "a system only has identity or meaning in the context of the systems around it" (Hutchins, 1996, p. 39). All systems are embedded within a "hierarchy of systems" (Hutchins, 1996, p. 40). The position of any system within the hierarchy is arbitrary and can be defined by

the researcher. For the purposes of this discussion, the advising system is a subsystem of the satellite campus studied.

If the admissions office did not recruit and matriculate students, there would be no students to teach or advise. If the financial aid office did not help to ensure that students have the funds to pay for tuition, they would not be able to attend. If the Registrar's office did not enroll students into courses and record grades, students would not have academic records. Each of these subsystems must function together, creating the system of the campus.

Musser (2006) reported similar findings whereas the advising system that she studied closely interacts with admissions, student affairs, career services, counseling services, and residence life. This study differs from Musser's in that the advising system at the satellite campus operates within the system of the campus, which is a component of the entire MAU system. The advising system serves multiple functions within the campus system. These functions, or purposes, are multifaceted, which leads to Principle 4.

"Principle 4: It is not Possible to Assign a Single Purpose to a Complex Social Problem" (Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p.91)

The academic advising system at the satellite campus has multiple purposes. These purposes define the identity of the advising system. The purposes of any system are defined by the subjective interpretation of the people in the system. The participants who were interviewed for this study reported multiple purposes for the advising system: retention, enrolling students in the right courses at the right time, teaching life skills, career advising, course selection, and helping students to get the most out of their education.

Professional advisors and non-advising staff and administrators had very different views of the purposes of academic advising. Professional advisors see course selection, major choice, and "keeping students on track" as byproducts of the advising. Advising administrators and the professional advisor at the satellite campus did not mention retention as being a purpose of advising. However, the administrators and non-advising staff at the satellite campus almost always stated retention and "keeping students on track" first when asked about the purposes of advising. Professional advisors never mentioned career advising as a purpose of the advising system, but faculty advisors, non-advising staff and administrators did.

As explained in Chapter 4, the faculty advisors interviewed would like to address more of the "philosophical" issues related to advising rather than those that are "mechanical" in nature. The advising literature characterizes this as prescriptive and developmental advising (Crookston, 1972). If they were able to do this, they would be much more in line with the goals of advising as stated in policy. Because students typically do not prepare for appointments, the advising sessions are dominated by "mechanical" issues, such as checking degree requirements and building semester schedules. With the electronic tools available (degree audits, eight semester plans, and the university catalog), students should be relatively certain about which courses they need to take, how to schedule them, and which courses satisfy which requirements. Ironically, these tools were developed and provided to students so that advisors would have more time to discuss the "philosophical" issues.

The glitch in the system here is that professional and faculty advisors are so busy that they do not turn away students who have not adequately prepared for appointments

and require the students to return at a later time after preparing for the meeting. Additionally, the pressure to retain students seems to result in a "customer service" mentality where the advisors do not feel comfortable holding students accountable. In some cases, advisors reported that students do not have the ability to complete even basic tasks such as keeping a day planner. One advisor reported that she has spent significant time teaching students how to do those things. While this is tangentially related to helping students to engage in their education, it prevents advisors from helping students to develop intellectually, which is a very important part of advising as explained in the literature and university policy.

The primary purpose of any system is survival (Hutchins, 1996). The satellite campus has one of the lowest retention rates in the entire university system. This puts pressure on the admissions staff to recruit more students. Advisors feel pressure to retain students. Since the campus is nearly entirely driven by enrollment, there is a real threat to the survival of the campus.

In systems theory, the behavior of the system defines its identity. Because of the misperceptions about advising held by satellite campus administrators and non-advising staff, referrals are made that set up false expectations for students. Furthermore, since advisors feel pressure about retention and keeping students happy, they respond to these expectations thereby creating a reinforcing loop that exacerbates the misunderstanding of advising. This misunderstanding results in advising being primarily prescriptive rather than developmental or learning centered, as espoused by policy.

The academic advising administrators at Main Campus had the most familiarity with the deeper purposes of advising as discussed in the literature on advising and

reflected in university policy. In fact, most of them have greatly influenced advising policy and procedures that are meant to define and operationalize the goals of academic advising. However, there is no way for them to enforce it at the satellite campus because they do not have authority over any of campus personnel.

The faculty advisors, administrators, and non-advising staff have no familiarity with the advising literature and demonstrate little understanding of the deep learning that the advising policy states as its purpose. This is due to the fact that there is no formal training about the theory and philosophy of advising. What is more problematic is that some of the purposes of advising that were reported by non-advisors and campus administrators were more related to other functional areas such as career services and learning support. One of the most common responses was that advisors should help students think about careers and choose majors that would lead to certain careers. The participants only mentioned purposes more related to learning centered or developmental advising when they were directly asked. They agreed, but never offered those things up as purposes of advising, even though the elements of learning centered and developmental advising are embodied in the University's advising policy.

The lack of formal evaluation of advising further exacerbates the problem. Advising is not evaluated at the programmatic or individual level. Even professional advisors are not evaluated on the quality of advising they provide (at Main Campus or the satellite).

"Principle 5: A System Cannot be Understood Until one Understands the Multiple Functions of the System" (Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p.93)

Every system consists of multiple functional subsystems (Hutchins, 1996; Meadows, 2008). The input subfunction is that which takes in information. The transformation subfunction is the mechanism used by the system to make meaning of the information it takes in. The output subfunction is the response of the system to this new information. The advising system at MAU takes in information from myriad sources, and the information comes in through multiple channels such as students, parents, faculty, the media, and innumerable other sources. Since the academic advising system is an open social system that consists of human beings, information from countless sources can be brought into the system.

It would be folly to assert that information comes into the system only through academic advisors. Information input channels are distributed throughout the system. Administrators at all levels, non-advising staff, and students are examples of the many people who can bring information into the system.

When information comes into the advising system, all people involved with advising must make meaning of it. This is known as the transformation subfunction. In the advising system at MAU there are some shared understandings about advising that help to "convert" the input. As described by one faculty advisor, academic advising has two primary functions. One is "mechanical" and the other is "philosophical." In the academic advising literature this would be called "prescriptive" and "developmental" or "learning centered" advising. In the case of advising, those who believe that advising is primarily about retention, keeping students on track for graduation, and other prescriptive

functions, might not be open to understanding advising in different ways. Since administrators, faculty, and non-advising staff have virtually no exposure to the literature on academic advising, they do not have a chance to incorporate that knowledge into their understanding of the theory and practice of advising.

Expecting non-advising personnel to be familiar with advising literature is not necessary or realistic. However, educating faculty, who provide the bulk of advising, and administrators who have authority over faculty and professional advising staff about the purposes of advising as defined by university policy could drastically change the way advising functions on the campus. Since those who deeply understand advising, for example the Undergraduate Advising Dean, have no authority over the way advisors are trained or evaluated, there is no way to ensure that advising is able to be practiced in the spirit of the policy.

The output function in organizations is the decisions that are made by those in the system once they make meaning of the input. In the advising system, these decisions are made by all of the people who are part of it, including students, advising staff, non - advising staff, and administrators. As discussed in Chapter Two, in any organization, subordinates must deeply understand and internalize the purposes and objectives of the system, as espoused by the organization's leadership. When understood, the subordinates will make decisions that support the system's purposes and objectives. Since the non - advising personnel and leadership have not deeply internalized the espoused purposes of the system, decisions are made that reflect their limited understanding of it. This can continually reinforce a misunderstanding of academic advising, thus reinforcing the culture of prescriptive advising that permeates the campus.

"Principle 6: A System's Structure Determines how it Functions"

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p. 98)

As data analysis progressed, it became clear that the system is comprised of several components that interact but are not formally connected in the power structure. As one participant put it "there is no lead functionality". In other words, there is no central authority over academic advising at the university. While Faculty Congress policy grants the Academic Advising Board (AAB) authority over the advising system, the AAB is a paper tiger. Although the AAB plays an important role in shaping policy and procedure that affects advising, they do not have the authority to enforce it. Furthermore, the Undergraduate Advising Dean has no authority outside of the Advising College. While the title suggests that this position has the power to ensure that good advising happens, the reality is that this position can do little more than encourage good advising.

It is clear that a lack of central authority results in an inconstancy of the sharing of information and quality of advising. The people who have authority over academic advisors may or may not have any training or understanding of the stated purposes of advising as defined by Faculty Congress. At the satellite campus studied, all academic advisors report to the Associate Dean of Academics (ADA), who reports to the Campus Dean. Since the ADA began her career as a faculty member who valued and enjoyed the work of advising, she has a strong understanding of what it means to provide high quality advising. Additionally, she was well trained as an advisor, for she was tenured in a Main Campus college during the era when annual or semi-annual meetings at Main Campus were the primary source of advising information. The ADA is the only person on the satellite campus who has the positional power to influence the academic advising system.

If the ADA did not support, value, and understand advising, the lack of central authority over advising could be very problematic. There would be no person or committee who would have the power to make changes at the satellite campus.

Another structural issue that greatly influenced the advising at satellite campuses was the reorganization that happened in the late 1990s. As stated above, the new faculty were not tenured in Main Campus colleges, yet the Campus Representative structure did not change. Since there is inconsistency among the Main Campus colleges in the way that they interact with the satellite campuses, advising information does not flow as the structure was designed. According to the Administrative Director (AD) of the School of General Studies, this resulted in significant problems with the quality of advising at satellite campus, particularly with regard to the students who started at the satellite campuses transferred to Main Campus to finish their degrees. The AD of SGS receives constant complaints about advising at the satellite campuses through formal channels such as student government. She reported that she is often a "punching bag" for the poor advising students receive at the satellite campuses. This is an example of the delayed reactions that can happen in complex social systems. The problems with advising did not appear until well after the campuses were reorganized.

"Principle 7: The Boundaries of Any System of Interest Must be Defined"

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p.100)

Defining the boundaries of the advising system at the satellite campus was very difficult due to the complexity of MAU. Academic advising is an open social system, which means that no clear boundaries exist as they would in a closed system like a car engine. Since the focus of this study was to develop an understanding of the way that

advising functions at a satellite campus, boundaries were determined by considering the departments, committees, and individuals who had the most interaction with regard to advising at the satellite campus.

Since this is an open system, the boundaries are porous. As discussed above, there are inestimable ways that the people in the advising system bring new information into the system. There is no way to control system input like there would be in a closed system.

"Principle 8: Understanding How a System Achieves its Purpose(s) is Essential to Understanding the System of Interest" (Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p. 101)

Advising achieves its purposes because some of the advisors enjoy doing the work. Faculty at the satellite campus who do not enjoy the work do not need to advise or advise well – there is no enforcement of either of these things since they are only evaluated on the number of advisees assigned to them.

As explained in Chapter 4, students learn who the good advisors are via word of mouth. Students seek the help of these advisors rather than those to whom they are assigned. This result of this is that good advisors see more students, even though those students are often assigned to other advisors. In systems theory this is called a reinforcing loop. Another reinforcing loop is that this dynamic enables weak advisors to do less advising. Formal incentives for faculty are based on research, and it is well known that research is of paramount importance with regard to promotion and tenure at a research university. The tenure-track faculty teach three courses per semester so that they can have more time to conduct research. The faculty who do not enjoy advising are therefore incentivized to be poor advisors because students will not seek them out, which gives

these faculty more time to research. It is through these two reinforcing loops that the advising system achieves its multiple purposes.

As explained above, due to the multiple demands on faculty advisors, the increased time spent on advising by good advisors disables their ability to discuss the "philosophical" topics that are encouraged by advising policy. Coupled with that dynamic, students often arrive to appointments expecting their advisors to tell them what to take, keep track of their degree completion, and even build schedules that are suitable to them. The emphasis on retention and "keeping students on track" overrides advising sessions and therefore often becomes the only thing discussed during an appointment.

When advising issues bubble up to the administrators, it is usually because the student perceives that the advisor has made a mistake regarding course selection (even though policy clearly states that course selection is ultimately the responsibility of the student). Since this is essentially the only time administrators get involved with advising, it reinforces the message that the primary purpose of advising is to keep students on track. This is another example of a reinforcing loop.

Ironically, the university invests considerable resources to provide students with the tools they need to ensure that they stay on track with their educational plans. Academic advisors from the Advising College took it upon themselves, with encouragement from the Academic Advising Board, to build four year semester plans for every major, of which there are over 160 at the university. The student information system includes a degree audit function. A degree audit is a report generated by the system that runs the student's academic record against any degree that they are interested in completing. In addition, great time and attention is spent developing and maintaining

various websites with advising information that is available to students and advisors alike. The advising policy clearly states that students are ultimately responsible for scheduling the right courses and keeping track of their own educational progress, and the above were developed to help them do so. If students were truly held responsible for this and came prepared for appointments, advisors could spend more time discussing the "philosophical" issues that can make advising the rich educational endeavor that the policy and advising literature defines as the purposes advising.

Since advising is not formally evaluated and advisors only receive feedback about advising when a student complains, this reinforces their anxiety about making mistakes. Because of all of these dynamics, the primary purpose of advising at the satellite campus ends up being prescriptive advising, thus ultimately defining prescriptive advising as the primary function of advising for many faculty, staff, and students.

"Principle 9: All Systems Must Adapt to Their Environment if They are to Survive".

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p. 103).

Hutchins (1996) and Senge (2006) explained that learning is essential to the survival of a system. The concept of the learning that is done within a system includes not only acquiring new knowledge, but also a reforming the cognitive and affective structures of the people within a system. When new information conflicts with current understanding, this creates cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance can be resolved by either changing current understanding or ignoring the new information, thus resisting change. Academic advising at the satellite campus studied has adapted in some ways, but not in others.

According to several participants at the satellite campus, the current Director of Advising inherited a very prescriptive culture. That is, academic advising was seen as primarily "mechanical." The former Director of Advising (DA) kept advising information "close to his chest" and doled it out on a need-to-know basis. A participant stated that the former DA approached his job in this way; "knowledge is power [so he] didn't disseminate a lot of information...kind of just like if you need it, come see me." While he was perceived as a person who was very knowledgeable about academic information, he was not particularly interested in engaging in developmental or learning centered advising. The participant continued, "There was no [discussion of] this is how we engage with our students, this is how we reach out to them, this is what we do. It was just - this is my area, this is what I tell students to schedule."

When the current Director of Advising was hired, she put a great amount of effort into transforming the culture of advising to one that is developmental or learning centered in nature by leading by example. According to participants, the current Director of Advising demonstrates a deep commitment to student development. Student participants in the focus group echoed this sentiment:

> I don't know how long [the current Director] has been here, but everybody loves her and talks about her. I remember as upcoming freshman someone mentioning her and they were like, oh yeah [the Director] is great and I was like I need to meet this [person because apparently she's a really good person to know. I think [she] just provide[s] something that nobody else on campus really does. Your teacher sees you in class and knows you as their student and an advisor kinda knows you as like, like a bigger guide basically. Like fairy godmother type stuff.

The faculty advisors and administrators who were interviewed seem to have absorbed some of that information for unknown reasons. However, many of the non - advising staff still view advising a primarily a prescriptive process. While they often commented that "advising is more than course scheduling" their views of the primary purpose of advising were prescriptive in nature (keeping students on track, for example). This suggests that the organization has not completely changed its mental models related to the purpose of advising. As discussed earlier, advisors feel pressure to focus on the mechanical or prescriptive aspects of advising at the expense of developmental or learning centered advising.

"Principle 10: Systems are Always Changing"

(Hutchins, 1996; Musser, 2006, p. 105)

The advising system at MAU is constantly in flux. New information enters the system through multiple channels. Faculty Congress polices are constantly being reconsidered and revised. Changes in curriculum are unending, and procedures must be modified to ensure that information flows and that changes are implemented properly. As in most organizations, there are elements of the advising system that are resistant to change. The people in the system resist change by ignoring new information, policies, and procedures rather then attempting to incorporate them into the day-to-day decisions that are made. Ironically, continued resistance to University efforts to transform academic advising from a prescriptive to a developmental or learning centered model could possibly damage the university and certainly undermines the efforts of the academic advising community. This resistance to change is subtle and nuanced. As explained in Chapter 4, by avoiding advising duties or advising poorly, weak advisors

indirectly push students toward stronger advisors. As a result, the stronger advisors do not have the time and energy that is part and parcel of developmental or learning centered advising.

All of the advisors who were interviewed support incorporating more developmental advising into their practice, but are so pressed for time that doing so is not practical. Some of the non-advising administrators also suggested that ideally, the purpose of advising would be developmental in nature. Yet, it seems as though they have not completely changed their mental models about academic advising. Change is occurring at the satellite campus as a result of the efforts of those who deeply value advising, but it is happening very slowly.

Suggestions for Universities

According to higher education researchers, academic advising is an essential component to undergraduate education with regard to student success (Kuh, 1997, 2011; Light, 2001; Lowenstein, 2005; Schulenberg, 2010; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2010a; White & Schulenberg, 2012). White and Schulenberg (2012) stated that:

> Contemporary higher education faces increasing pressure from external sources to demonstrate accountability. As support for higher education dwindles at public institution, and as every program, service department and unit may be asked to justify its existence; the activity of academic advising is not exempt from these pressures. With no one (or thing) to replace the staff academic advisor, with faculty advisors stretched to their limits not only with advisees but with teaching and research responsibilities as well, with technology not able to respond to the

> "human needs" components of advising, academic advising finds itself surviving within an environment of diminishing student resources… and ironically, with greater student demands for contact. (pp. 16–17)

With rising tuition, low employment rates of recent college graduates, and disinvestment from public higher education, the need for advisors is increasing. White and Schulenberg (2012) stressed the importance of advising assessment to demonstrate to administrators that advising is worth the investment. Assessment is a crucial component to any advising system because there is no way to know if advising is accomplishing its goals until a rigorous assessment program is implemented and acted upon.

In order for academic advising to achieve its stated goals, all personnel associated with a given advising system should be educated about the theory and philosophy of advising so that they can understand its deeper purposes. If the people who interact with the system do not deeply internalize the goals of the system, they are unlikely to make act in accordance with these goals. Academic advisors must also be held accountable for the way that they practice advising. This harms students by This too relies on measurable outcomes and proper training, for it would be untenable to hold people accountable for outcomes that are not defined or explained.

Moreover, as stated above, strong advisers often see a larger number of advisees than weak advisers. The two themes related to this, "good advising equals more advising" and "advising enables the weak to not advise" are particularly problematic. These dynamics reward unwanted behavior by enabling poor advisers to see less students while still getting credit for advising. This behavior also overwhelms strong advisers with a significantly increased advising workload.

Not only is this unfair to advisers, it also harms students. As one student stated, "I think if I had a helpful advisor like that I'd feel comfortable going to them to help me schedule, but after what happened the first semester, like I know I scheduled my second semester all by myself." In other words, this student has decided to stop seeking the help of his adviser because of his experience with an adviser who did not want to advise. As reported above, faculty, staff, and administrators are well aware of these issues, yet they persist. It is likely that these dynamics are in play at other universities at well. If universities are serious about providing high quality advising, policies, assessment, and incentives must be closely examined to ensure that the advising system is designed to facilitate it.

Suggestions for Further Research

Over 40 years after Crookston's (1972) article, which was the first to suggest that advising is more than a prescriptive task, the field of academic advising still struggles to establish a distinct identity. The quest for normative advising theory may be of limited utility in practice, as the context of the university is what determines the true identity of advising at a given institution. Prescribing ideal functions, purposes, or goals of advising is certainly a noble cause, but universities must design advising systems such that those goals can be realized.

MAU is an excellent example of this. It is generally agreed upon, among advising scholars and practitioners, that a developmental or learning centered advising model is superior to models that are predominately prescriptive. MAU has committed tremendous human and financial resources to not only advocating for academic advising that goes beyond prescriptive functions, but also by supporting the scholarship of advising by

encouraging staff to write about advising, attend conferences, and publishing a refereed advising journal. Yet, at the satellite campus studied, it is clear that prescriptive advising dominates advising activity.

Ultimately, it is not the lack of scholarship on normative theory or unarticulated goals and objectives that is contributing to the lack of identity or confusion about advising at MAU, but rather systemic issues that perpetuate and exacerbate a culture of prescriptive advising. While this study is not generalizable, the methods used here, as well as in Musser (2006), could help to uncover similar issues at other universities. Continued study of advising systems may reveal the underlying causes of the lack of identity lamented in the advising literature.

Universities interested in creating advising systems that support student engagement, intellectual development, and other worthy, but lofty, ideals they would be well by using systems theory to determine how advising systems actually behave. Since it is the behavior of a system that determines its identity, understanding the behavior of advising systems at multiple institutions would significantly improve the efforts of the field academic advising to establish a unique identity.

Conclusion

The complexity of Mid-Atlantic University provided an excellent case to examine how the academic advising system functions. Great amounts of financial and human resources are dedicated to provide excellent academic advising throughout the university. The people within the system deeply value students and truly want them to have the best academic advising possible. While there are tremendous problems with the quality of academic advising at the satellite campuses (as reported by a central administrator at

Main Campus), a great deal of very good advising work is done at the satellite campus that was studied.

The primary issues that cause problems with advising are systemic in nature. There is no single governing body that can enforce academic advising policy, assess academic advising, or ensure that the people who do academic advising are doing a good job. The problems with advising are primarily related to students who begin their studies at the branch campus and transfer to Main Campus to complete their degrees. The structure of the advising system impedes information flow to these advisors because the structure has not changed to accommodate the reorganization of the satellite campuses that occurred in the 1990s.

Recent changes in University leadership could potentially rectify this situation. Since data were collected, there was a great amount of turnover throughout Main Campus and the satellite campus that was studied. These changes create an opportunity for the academic advising community to redouble its efforts to improve advising at the campuses.

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Appendix A - Interview Questions

Question Type	Research Question	Advising Administration	Other Administration and Staff	Advisors and CRs	Student Focus Group
Contextual/Historical	All	What is the historical context of advising at MAU?	What is your history with advising at MAU?	What is your history with advising at MAU?	What has your advising experience been like at MAU?
Job Responsibilities	All	What are your job responsibilities?	What are your job responsibilities?	What are your job responsibilities?	What are your responsibilities as related to advising?
Purpose(s) of Advising	All	What are the purpose(s) of advising at?	What are the purpose(s) of advising?	What are the purpose(s) of advising?	What are the purpose(s) of advising?
Political Context	All	What is the political structure of advising with relation to the campuses?	What is the political structure of advising with relation to the campuses?	What is the political structure of advising? Who holds the power to make changes?	Who has the power to make changes with regard to advising?
Services/Clients	All	What services does the advising system provide and who receives those services?	What services does the advising system provide and who receives those services?	Who are the students you advise? Who do you not advise?	What resources do you use for advising? Who helps you with advising issues?
Methods/Techniques	All	How are these services provided?	What methods or techniques do you use to provide these services?	How are these services provided?	Describe your experience with your advisor.
Communication	All	How is advising information communicated?	How is advising information communicated?	How is advising information communicated?	How is advising information communicated?
Professional Development	All	How do you train your staff? What professional development opportunities do you support?	How do you train your staff with regard to the way they interact with advising (e.g. referrals to advisors)?	How were you trained, and how do you keep current?	N/A
Evaluation	All	How is advising evaluated?	How is advising evaluated?	How is advising evaluated?	How is advising evaluated?

Appendix B - Table of Participants

Participant	Advisor	Administrator	Faculty	Campus
Undergraduate Advising Dean (UAD)	Yes	Yes	No	Main
Current UAD	Yes	Yes	No	Main
Campus Dean	No	Yes	No	Satellite
Associate Dean of Academics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Satellite
Director of Advising	Yes	Yes	No	Satellite
Associate Dean of Advising	Yes	Yes	No	Main
Administrative Director, School of General Studies	Former	Yes	No	Main
Faculty Member 1	Yes - four year campus program and college representative	No	Yes	Satellite
Faculty Member 2	Yes -four year campus program and college representative	No	Yes	Satellite
Faculty Member 3	Yes - four year campus program	Yes	Yes	Satellite
Faculty Member 4	Yes - Four year campus program only	No	Yes	
Faculty Member 5	Yes - College Representative	No	Yes	Satellite
Student Focus Group	N/A	N/A	N/A	Satellite
Campus Retention Team	(Director of Advising Serves)	N/A	N/A	Satellite
Associate Dean of Admissions	No	Yes	No	Satellite
Registrar	No	No	No	Satellite

Financial Aid Director	No	No	No	Satellite
Director of Advising (DA)	Yes	No	No	Satellite
Support Staff for DA and Registrar	No	No	No	Satellite

Appendix C - Sample Site Permission Letter

Dear XXXX,

I am a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). I have received permission from the institutional review board (IRB) at IUP to conduct research involving students, faculty, staff and administrators who are associated with academic advising. I am writing to seek permission to collect data at your campus. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether or not you permit me to do so.

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the functions, purposes, and identity of a university advising system comparing the ideals espoused by advisors and administrators to actual practice at a satellite campus of XXX. This is being done to contribute to the theoretical base of academic advising and to help develop an understanding of the ways in which academic advising operates at a large university. It is not an evaluation of the advising program at XXX.

Your campus has been selected because it is a small satellite campus of XXX. Individuals who decide to participate in this study will participate in focus groups or one-on-one interviews lasting approximately 90 minutes. Participants may be contacted after the interview to clarify and confirm that I correctly understand your answers to the questions. Pseudonyms will be used to protect confidentiality. Should any participant decide to exit the study, they may do so by notifying me at the contact information listed in this letter or simply ask to conclude the interview.

In order to recruit students to participate in a focus group, I am requesting a listing of XXX students with their email addresses from a staff member, who you identify as appropriate, at your campus. From this list, students will be randomly selected to be invited to participate.

I am currently an employee at XXX. Whether or not you decide to participate in this study, our professional relationship will not be damaged nor will your standing at the university be adversely affected in any way.

The researcher will take every precaution to ensure the confidentiality of the information provided, the names of individuals and the university itself. In addition, the principal investigator will securely store the data in a locked box in his home. All data collected will be destroyed three years after the study is completed. Your information will be confidential; all findings will be reported using pseudonyms or as aggregate data. Data collected may be used for scholarly endeavors beyond this dissertation such as for publication in scholarly journals or presentations at conferences.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me, or the faculty sponsor of this study, using the information below.

Sincerely,

Sean Bridgen

Valeri R. Helterbran

Principal Investigator

Sean Thomas Bridgen
Doctor of Education Candidate
Department of Professional Studies
Studies in Education
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Pennsylvania
Email: zvlc@iup.edu

Faculty Sponsor

Dr. Valeri Helterbran
Professor
Department of Professional
in Education
Indiana University of

Email: vhelter@iup.edu

Please read the statement below. If you agree to grant permission for this data to be collected in your department, please print your name, sign your name, date the form, and provide your contact information.

I have read and understand the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I grant the principal investigator permission to conduct this study in my department. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

Participant Printed Name Participant Signature

_____

Date

Telephone Number Email Address

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (PHONE 724-357-7730).

Appendix D - Sample Informed Consent Letter

Dear _____

I am a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). I have received permission from the institutional review board (IRB) at IUP to conduct research involving students, faculty, staff and administrators who are associated with academic advising at your campus. The following information is provided in order to explain the study so that you can decide whether or not to participate.

The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the functions, purposes, and identity of a university advising system comparing the ideals espoused by advisors and administrators to actual practice at a satellite campus of XXX. This is being done to contribute to the theoretical base of academic advising and to help develop an understanding of the ways in which academic advising operates at a large university. It is not an evaluation of the advising program at XXX.

You are eligible to participate in this focus group because you are an undergraduate student at XXX. Individuals who decide to participate in this focus group will be contacted to arrange a time and location that is convenient for all participants. They will then receive email reminders two weeks, one week, and one day prior to the selected focus group date, depending on the interval between the date the focus group is scheduled and the actual focus group date. The focus group will last for approximately 90 minutes. Participants may be contacted after the interview to clarify and confirm that I correctly understand your answers to the questions. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your confidentiality. Should you decide to exit the study, you may do so by notifying me at the contact information listed in this letter or simply ask to conclude the interview.

I am currently an employee at XXX. Whether or not you decide to participate in this study, our professional relationship will not be damaged nor will your standing on your campus be adversely affected in any way. In fact, you may find participation in this study to be enjoyable in offering your point of view on academic advising at XXX

The researcher will take every precaution to ensure the confidentiality of the information provided, the names of individuals and the university itself. In addition, the principal investigator will securely store the data in a locked box in his home. All data collected will be destroyed three years after the study is completed. Your information will be confidential; all findings will be reported using pseudonyms or as aggregate data. Data collected may be used for scholarly endeavors beyond this dissertation such as for publication in scholarly journals or presentations at conferences.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any

time with no penalty by informing me via email, by phone, or in person. If you decide to exit the study, all information associated with your participation will be destroyed if you so request. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me, or the faculty sponsor of this study, using the information below.

Sincerely,

Principal Investigator

Sean Thomas Bridgen
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Studies in Education
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Pennsylvania
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Faculty Sponsor

Dr. Valeri Helterbran
Professor
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in Education
Indiana University of

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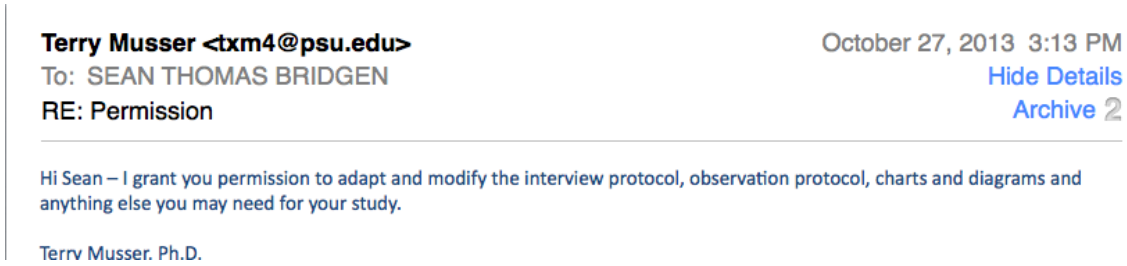
Appendix E - Permission Email from Terry Musser



Terry Musser <txm4@psu.edu> October 27, 2013 3:13 PM
To: SEAN THOMAS BRIDGEN Hide Details
RE: Permission Archive

Hi Sean – I grant you permission to adapt and modify the interview protocol, observation protocol, charts and diagrams and anything else you may need for your study.

Terry Musser, Ph.D.