

## **How To Be A Good Advisee**

**Dr. Ken Petress**

Academic advising is a reciprocal activity; it takes both an advisor and advisee working together as a team for the activity to fully succeed. Effective advising relationships help enhance students' academic progress; improve students' emotional state; aid in guiding students to form sensible long-term plans; and assists institutions by reducing many avoidable problems. There are seven advisee characteristics that enhance the likelihood of advising success; this article discusses these characteristics: (1) advisees and their advisors need to meet more frequently than once a term to register for the following semester. Advising is more than a registration exercise. Both parties to the advising relationship need to take responsibility to keep in contact, keep informed, and to make the relationship active, not passive; (2) preparation for advising, (3) information accuracy, (4) advisee disclosure to advisor, (5) timeliness of advising, (6) advising follow through, and (7) asking useful and necessary questions.

Advisees need to enter the advising arena prepared to work with their advisor. Such preparedness includes: (1) having in hand relevant materials such as a college catalog, graduation progress reports, vocational goal outlines, and equipment needed to take notes, (2) being mentally and emotionally prepared for participation in the advising activity; (3) being in a positive frame of mind for planning your future and making decisions; (4) having researched any unresolved matters from previous advising sessions and those developed since the last advising meeting; and

(5) having thought out clear responses to obvious or anticipated advisor questions.

Advisees and their advisors need to keep accurate, up to date, and complete records of what action has been taken and what decisions have been made, what is in progress, and what has been promised, stated, or requested of either advising relationship partner. The need for complete, up-to-date, and accurate records assures the advisee, the advisor, and the institution that such accusations as: forgetfulness, sloppiness, betrayal, or incompetence will not emerge in the future. Assiduous record keeping -- and sharing -- also protects against honest forgetfulness, accidental record loss or destruction, change of advisor, or an unsuccessful appeal to higher authority sometime in the future. Advisors and advisees need to share all information relevant to the advising activity; secrecy is anathema to a good advising relationship.

Advisees need to come to the advising session on time and be prepared to remain until needed work is finished. To assist the process, advisees are encouraged to prepare an agenda - as is the advisor also encouraged -- and to have questions written down to avoid omission and to enhance clarity. Advisees and advisors are encouraged not to wander off the issues at hand and to assist each other in staying on point. Should an advisee need more time than is customarily set aside by an advisor, advisees need to be assertive and request a lengthier time for the advising session.

Advisees need to follow through on actions involving their academic progress and their personal lives. Plans and promises made that are not acted upon or that are half heartedly entered into become sources of great frustration; and these tend to lead to mistrust. If action is being taken on an advisee's behalf by others, that advisee ought respectfully ask how long such action will likely take to complete. If deadlines arrive without being notified of task completion, advisees should check to see what the status of the action is. Patience is a virtue; however, one should not let matters go unchecked for too long.

Advisees need to follow through on necessary tasks and on promises made to the advisor. Incomplete or forgotten tasks for typically result in advising delays, frustration, and errors. Advising is a mutual responsibility. Teamwork is essential to success and contentment.

Advisees need to be able to ask quality questions in the advising arena as well as be able to provide clear, honest, open, complete, coherent, relevant answers to questions. Characteristics of quality questions include: (1) requesting clarification whenever there is doubt in any matter, (2) seeking specificity whenever dialogue seems abstract, ambiguous, or vague; (3) asking for rationales for any requests seen as unclear or questionable, (4) civilly challenging assertions or inferences not adequately supported and (5) remember to make requests, not demands.

Advisees need to be willing to disclose to their advisor any information relevant to an advisee's progress; explanations for

impediments to progress; new or altered academic and vocational aspirations; advisee needs, wants, and fears so as to arm the advisor with everything necessary to give advice, to act as a resource person, and to refer appropriately. If an advisee feels uncomfortable disclosing relevant information to an advisor, a new advisor request probably ought be made.

These qualities in an advisee along with concomitant behavior from the advisor should promote a healthy advising climate and should enhance students' success.