

Advising for Academic Success

A Foundational Structure for Managed Enrollment

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Goals and Objectives

After completing this session, participants should be able to understand:

- The *rationale* for implementing an academic advising framework.
- Possible *tools* to implement academic advising.
- The *benefits* of academic advising.
- The need for a common *language* and *process* for staff implementation.
- Importance of using a *system of documents* for managed enrollment.

Your Program

What are the problems or challenges you face in your own programs that impact student success?

Programmatic Requirements (In Kentucky)

- 12 hours instruction to be considered enrolled (each county has an enrollment goal)
- Standardized assessment in reading, math, and/or language
- 30 hours (50 next year) instruction before progress testing on TABE (40 hours for CASAS)
- Documentation of attendance hours

The Problem

- Adult Education programs have historically struggled with student retention.
- Having an enrollment goal dictates a strong need for retention.
- Low retention means that students do not stay long enough to be enrolled, post-tested or make instructional gains.

The Solution

There needs to be a way to ensure that *programmatic requirements* and student goals are met.

Rationale of Academic Advising

- The old ways didn't work well enough. We needed a way to keep students longer and to make someone responsible for encouraging retention.
- Academic Advising provides the **structure** to move toward managed enrollment and for all processes to relate to **retention**.

The Language of Academic Advising

See handout:

“Vocabulary: A Jessamine
County Adult Education
Lexicon in Color”

Orientation

At Orientation, new students are told that they will receive an Academic Advisor who will discuss their assessment results with them. Orientation is a shared responsibility among staff.

Tools:

- ✓ Black Box
- ✓ Manila Folders
- ✓ Work Log
- ✓ Orientation Checklist

Advisor Assignment

The process of assigning students an academic advisor is random, after prior conditions have been met, such as:

- Parents with young children are assigned to the Family Literacy instructor.
- English as a Second Language students are assigned to the ESL instructor.
- Court referrals (Diversion Program) are assigned to one instructor.
- Students who can attend only in the evening are assigned to either of the evening instructors.

Tools:

- ✓ Manila Folder
- ✓ Enrollment Form

Advisor Assignment

If the student does not fall into any of those primary categories, then the assignment becomes random. All assignments are tracked in a **binder**, so as to avoid one teacher from becoming overloaded with advisees. It's important to note that *the advisor is not necessarily the student's instructor.*

Advisor Meeting

After being assigned a student, the advisor scores his/her TABE, creates a Blue Folder, and sets up a meeting with the student to review the results and create an educational plan and timeline (including classes, subject labs, learning center time, PLATO, homework). The advisor also addresses any possible learning barriers or special needs.

Tools:

- ✓ Blue Folder
- ✓ Orange Card
- ✓ Work Log

Tracking Progress

The **Blue Folder** contains:

- Copy of enrollment form
- Copies of assessment results
- Work Logs ("yellow sheets") which are used to note:
 - Academic gain
 - Attendance hours (both on-site and homework). These hours are checked off by data entry person as they are entered into AERIN.
 - On-site and homework *activities* the student has worked on are clearly listed.

"Red Flags"

Questions an Advisor or Administrator asks oneself when looking at Blue Folders and the AERIN report:

- Has 12-hour attendance been met to count toward enrollment?
- If 30-50 hours have been logged, has the student made a gain? If not, why not?
- Is the student in ABE Level 6? (This level requires no gain.)
- Where is the student in the GED attainment process?

More "Red Flags"

- Has a GED goal and/or post-secondary goal been included for students an advisor knows has gotten their GED or is going on to post-secondary?
- Are the hours in AERIN what they should be? Are the goals what they should be? Are the achievements what they should be? Have they been exited?
- Have 90 days passed without contact from the student? Should the student be separated?

Using Data: Attendance

Weekly data report (student attendance hours combined with enrollment status; in KY this is from AERIN) is cross-checked by staff and/or administrator with data in the **Blue Folder**. Discrepancies are discussed with the data entry clerk.

Using Data: Testing

The Advisor:

- Checks data report for testing gains.
- Checks Blue Folder for testing data for clarification (for example, if a re-test was administered with no gain, or if the student has not been re-tested but has sufficient hours).

Data Follow-Up

How do you use data? What are some of the scenarios you have encountered when evaluating student testing progress?

Attendance Follow-Up

The Advisor checks recent student attendance. If 2 weeks have passed since the student has attended any instruction, then the advisor calls the student and encourages them to return.

Attendance Follow-Up

- If the phone has been disconnected, the advisor writes a quick personalized letter or email (we also have pre-printed cards that can be personalized).
- Any phone or mail contact (or attempted contact) is noted on the Work Log, including a brief description of the conversation.

Attendance Follow-Up

- Retention calls may reveal new barriers which are hindering the student's progress or attendance.
- The Advisor may make referrals to other agencies for service. These referrals are noted on the Work Log. The advisor may decide to send homework home so as not to lose any momentum.

The Role and Benefits of the Advisor

Through regular, personalized contact, the student comes to feel that there is someone on staff who genuinely cares about that student's achievements. This feeling of connection helps to keep students coming back for service.

The Role and Benefits of the Advisor

- It is important to note that the advisor is not always the student's primary instructor.
- The student will probably have contact with multiple staff members.
- It is still the advisor's responsibility to focus on that student's retention and monitor progress testing.

Programmatic Benefits

Having a designated Advisor gives the administrator or an instructor a contact person for discussion of problems or concerns.

Programmatic Benefits

- Creates ongoing dialogue among instructors.
- Provides framework for discussion at weekly staff meetings.
- Since the advisor is not necessarily the student's primary instructor, all staff feel a greater sense of involvement with the student population.

Programmatic Benefits

Jessamine County Adult Education Outcomes:

Achievements

- June 2008 to April 2009 – 28% increase
- June 2007 to April 2009 – 127% increase

NRS Eligible Enrollments

- June 2008 to April 2009 – 87% increase
- June 2007 to April 2009 – 139% increase

What You Need for Implementation

- AERIN (database) training – good data entry; ability to run reports
- Creation of a common language for forms and processes
- Communication with data entry clerk
- Communication among instructors
- Weekly follow-up / Checks & Balances
- Administrator who serves as “monitor”

The Last Word

- It is difficult to change the status quo.
- Designing and implementing Academic Advising required buy-in from staff.
- After experiencing success, the process has been easier to maintain.

Testimonials

“I believe that the Academic Advising process has fostered a sense of 'teamwork' among the staff, in terms of how we provide service to individual students. Since it is often the case that advisors do not necessarily provide the instruction, students reap the benefit from having contact with multiple staff members. This team effort often results in enhanced strategies toward student success.”

Ed Mayfield, Instructor
Jessamine County Adult Education

Testimonials

“I think that having an academic advisor helps students develop support, prioritize goals, and feel more connected to the program, resulting in greater student retention.”

Marysusan Houk, Family Literacy Instructor
Jessamine County Adult Education

Testimonials

“Overall, I think our students are better served with the advising system in place. The student has a person they can go to for any problem they encounter on their way to reaching their goal. The advisor can monitor the student's progress, attendance, and any issue that needs addressing more closely because it's handled much like case management. It's crucial to have good communication and cooperation between staff members in order to adequately meet each student's needs.”

Joann Caras, Instructor
Jessamine County Adult Education

Testimonials

“The best part about the Academic Advisor program is that the workload is more evenly split up among our staff now. It's not just one or two people that bear all of the burden for reporting student data or retention call-backs. The system also ensures that each student gets regular one-on-one time with an instructor.”

Jeff McDanald, Instructor
Jessamine County Adult Education