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Personal Academic Advising Philosophy Statement

The mission of the Student Success Center is “to empower students to take ownership of their own learning and development in order to become critical, engaged, lifelong learners” (Bellarmine University, 2018b). According to Chickering (1994), the development of students into lifelong learners is the fundamental purpose of academic advising, “Our relationships with students - the questions we raise, the perspectives we share, the resources we suggest, the short-term decisions and long-range plans we help them think through - all should aim to increase their capacity to take charge of their own existence” (p.50) Through collaborative relationships, the Academic Advising Center accomplishes this by aiding students in the creation and implementation of academic, personal, and career plans to foster success and prioritizes graduating in four years (Bellarmine University, 2018a).

As an alumni since 2009 and staff member since 2013, I have experienced many facets of the academic advising experience on Bellarmine’s campus. Reflecting on my time as a student and professional, I realize advisors have a unique opportunity to tap into and explore each individual student’s potential. My goal as an academic advisor is to aid students in maximizing the impact of that potential as they navigate their college experiences and make the most out of that potential. The kinds of relationships that I strive to develop with students go beyond transactional interactions and embrace the opportunity to help students integrate their interests and values into their academic and professional goals.

As an advising professional, I accept NACADA’s Core Values, which were established through the examination of many contexts in which academic advising occurs (NACADA, 2017). This mirrors the importance of considering all of the identities and experiences that students may bring into an advising relationship. By integrating NACADA’s Core Values, I aim to create a comfortable space that welcomes and embraces students, regardless of their racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual, socioeconomic, or political identities. Reynolds (2009) asserts that “awareness of group differences helps practitioners individualize and personalize their interventions so that those interventions are more relevant and meaningful” (p.117). Developing such a space requires the establishment of rapport, active listening, reflecting, summarizing, questioning, clarifying, setting goals or action plans, and making referrals when necessary (Reynolds, 2009).

The importance of integrating student development theory and resources from professional organizations is paramount for higher education institutions. It allows professionals to craft and synthesize a multilayered framework for evaluating student needs. Student development theories that directly inform my advising approach and interactions with students are Sanford’s Challenge and Support, Schlossberg’s Transition Theory, Chickering’s Vectors of Identity Development, and Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self-Authorship. NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising embraces developmental advising. While several definitions and characterizations of developmental advising exist, I connect most with Creamer and Creamer’s (1994) definition: “the use of interactive teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies to assist students to achieve specific learning, developmental, career, and life goals” (p.19). Highlighting the roles and responsibilities of both the student and the advisor further delineates advising from a prescriptive model to a collaborative one that benefits the entire community. All goals should be “set by students in partnership with advisors and are used to guide all interactions between advisor and student” (Creamer & Creamer, p.19). A developmental approach incorporates decision-making processes, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, problem solving, and rational thought of both the student and the advisor. It cultivates a space characterized by trust, understanding, confidence, and empathy.

I value research and assessment as tools to enact change, progress, and improvement to advising practices at Bellarmine. I also adhere to the concept of advising as teaching, which builds upon developmental advising to incorporate the educational mission of the institution (Pettay, 2007). Pettay (2007) describes advising as “an educational experience where students connect who they are with what they are learning and who they want to become”. Bellarmine’s mission is to “develop the intellectual, moral, ethical, and professional competencies for successful living, work, leadership, and service to others” (Bellarmine University, 2018c). As an advisor, I aim to teach students the value of a liberal arts education by guiding them to connect their general education courses to their major coursework, larger field of study, professional goals, and society. I also encourage students to look for opportunities outside of the classroom to further develop their identities and skill set.

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