

**Academic Advising for Arts Undergraduate Students
at English-speaking Canadian Public Universities: The Advisors' Story**

by

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ABSTRACT

This is the first Canadian study to determine current procedures and practice in for undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts English-speaking Canadian public universities and to determine Arts advisors' perceptions of the impact of academic advising on student development and retention. A questionnaire was mailed to 82 academic advisors at 41 English public universities across Canada. Responses received represented 73% of eligible universities. Personal interviews followed with nine volunteers.

Results showed that academic advising practice is not guided by formal policy that links the service to university and faculty goals. Instead, advising is evolving in response to the call for university accountability. Advising practices appear to be changing to meet the expectations and demands from students that their undergraduate experience facilitates the achievement of academic goals in association with career goals and other personal goals.

Despite the lack of guiding policy on Arts academic advising, there is considerable amount of consistency in current practice across Canada. Advising is primarily a Faculty responsibility and the responsibility for delivering general academic advice has largely shifted from professors to professional advisors. Advisors have a broad range of responsibilities and extensive decision-making authority, especially in the areas of program planning with students, and in interpreting and applying policies and procedures. The hours that students can gain access to advising differs among Arts advising units. However, the methods of delivering advice are similar. In all advising

units the student to advisor ratio is extremely high. Most units are responsible for providing the service to thousand of students. Arts advisors are also extensively involved a variety of outreach and liaison activities directed at potential and current students and the broader university community and the public.

Arts academic advisors believe that advising improves student persistence to degree completion and hence also improves university retention rates. At the same time, some advisors perceive that central administration does not recognize the importance of the service and that this lack of recognition combined with heavy advising loads, complex policy and program regulations, and shrinking resources affects the quality of academic advising. Despite the difficulties mentioned by advisors, many advising units have initiatives in place to expand their academic advising service through joint strategies with other student services that will link students' short-term and long-term academic, career and life plans.

The study concludes with recommendations on developing academic policy and programs, as well providing suggestions for further research.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Academic advising is the university service that the majority of undergraduate students utilize (Gome, Hall & Murphy, 1993; Metzner, 1989; Walker, 1994; Ward, 1992). Previous research has shown that when advising is effectively integrated into the undergraduate experience, it positively affects students' persistence with their programs through to degree completion (Astin, 1993; Pascarella, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Advising contributes to students' ability to make informed choices about their academic careers at the appropriate times. It follows that students' satisfaction with their choices is accompanied by a greater commitment to degree completion. Consequently, more students completing degree programs means increased university retention rates. Despite the direct benefits to students and the indirect benefits to universities, a Canadian study has not been conducted on how academic advising is provided to undergraduate students.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine how the Faculties of Arts at English-speaking Canadian public universities are providing academic advising services to undergraduate students. The intent is to provide a description of current practice by

obtaining feedback from current Arts academic advisors. The description will be followed by a discussion of the implications for student retention and make recommendations on the development of academic advising policy and practice.

Background/Rationale

Previous research has confirmed that students' satisfaction with their undergraduate degree programs is affected by a variety of experiences (Astin, 1993; Metzner, 1989). Academic advising is one of those experiences. Because advising is an activity that takes place outside the classroom it has not received the same close scrutiny as activities that occur inside the classroom. However, the research that has been done shows that some out-of-class activities, such as academic advising, have a direct effect on the undergraduate experience and an indirect effect on institutions' retention rates (Astin, 1993; Metzner, 1989; Tinto, 1987). As a result, academic advising has been recommended as a means to improving retention (Forrest, 1985) because of its potential to link "students' goals with institutional resources on a personalized basis" (Metzner, 1989, p.422). However, a number of studies have also indicated students' dissatisfaction with academic advising (Fielstein & Lammers, 1992; Gome, Hall & Murphy, 1993; Walker, 1994). To begin to understand why there is a gap between what the theorists are saying and what students are saying, current advising practice is worthy of study.

This study approached the issue by conducting a survey of advising offices in the Faculty of Arts at English speaking public universities across the country and revealed

current philosophy and practice from the perspective of people doing the advising. This study, when combined with other research on students' opinions and administrators' views on advising, will provide a complete overview of the service.

Research Questions

The following primary research question was investigated:

What are current procedures and practices in academic advising for undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts at English-speaking Canadian public universities?

In addition to the primary question the study also addressed the following secondary question:

In the context of current literature, what do Arts academic advisors perceive is the impact of academic advising on student development and university retention?

Significance of the Study

On one level the findings have the potential to directly improve all undergraduates' experiences at all Canadian universities by helping advisors assess their own practices in the context of student development and retention. However, more profoundly, the findings draw attention to the issue of accountability in today's university

and begs the question of how universities are addressing and servicing the needs of today's students.

CHAPTER 2

Academic Advising In Context

The literature was explored from three dimensions: (1) through the definition of terminology associated with academic advising; (2) through the association of advising and the undergraduate experience, and; (3) through the relationship of the academic advising and the educational environment.

Definition of Terms

Academic Advising

The theme throughout recent literature on academic advising is that the purpose of the service is to assist in facilitating the successful academic and social integration of students into an environment that is foreign to them (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Metzner (1989) describes academic advising as the link between students' goals and their institution's resources. Tinto (1987) and Feldman and Newcomb (1969) attribute advising with having a role in both student retention and student development as it assists students in leaving previous communities and facilitates their merging and progression into the university community. Academic advising is seen by other theorists as one means

to encourage student involvement in the university environment. According to Astin (1993) and Forrest (1985), the more students are involved in the university environment, the more likely they are to succeed in achieving their academic goals. More recent research (Andres, Andruske & Hawkey, 1996) proposes that the quality of the interaction with student services personnel, such as academic advisors, strongly affects students' perceptions of their undergraduate experiences.

Based on the above, it can be said that advising's primary responsibility is to assist students in identifying academic goals and developing a sense of purpose and direction to their studies that will assist them in achieving their goals. New students consistently begin their university programs needing and wanting to know what is expected of them, both academically and socially, to earn their degree (Andres, Andruske, & Hawkey, 1996; Billson & Brooks Terry, 1987; Tinto, 1988). Academic advising is one means by which students learn these requirements. As students develop a sense of purpose to their studies they also develop a sense of personal identity within the university community. Having attained a sense of purpose and identity, students' abilities to overcome obstacles and persist in completing their degree program becomes resolute (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). To recognize the potential importance of academic advising, it is necessary to understand the theories on undergraduate student development and retention.

Perry (1970, 1981) presents a scheme of nine "positions" which attempt to map student development through orderly stages of recognizing the increasingly complex and relative nature of knowledge and values. He begins with the assumption that most

students arrive at university believing that knowledge is absolute and that professors possess such knowledge. Students next realize that it is possible to have a variety of perspectives on issues and they grant these varying viewpoints validity. This is followed by the recognition that knowledge is contextual and then by the realization that not all viewpoints are equally valid. As students move through the final stages they confirm their own positions and responsibilities in relation to others, thereby establishing their own identities. Perry (1981) asserts that because student development is recurrent, each position “both includes and transcends” (p.78) previous positions.

Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) describe the development process as a series of vectors along which students mature. Development along each vector involves a cycle of change and synthesizing as students increase their awareness of the complexity of knowledge. Within the context of a university environment students develop along the following seven vectors: (1) competency (intellectually, physically, emotionally), (2) managing emotions, (3) developing autonomy (interdependency), (4) establishing identity, (5) freeing interpersonal relationships, (6) developing purpose, and (7) developing integrity.

Baxter Magolda (1992) views the development of students towards attaining this sense of self as a journey through levels of “knowing” (p.4) that connect students to where they are intellectually and socially and then reconnects them with more complicated ways of thinking. Based on previous research by Perry (1970) and Chickering (1969), Baxter Magolda (1992) theorizes that psychosocial development occurs through stages of absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent thinking

and ultimately contextual knowing. Her theory is significant in that it can be applied to all students regardless of their personal characteristics and social and economic backgrounds.

Perry's positions (1970, 1981), Chickering and Reisser's vectors (1993), and Baxter Magolda's (1992) levels of knowledge identify students' intellectual and social development as helical and experienced differently by each student.

"Development...stems from relational opportunities to interact and experience feedback from others, to differentiate previous perspectives and reintegrate them into new ones...in contexts offering confirmation, contradiction, and continuity" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p.343). These development theories when applied to students in a university environment indicate that students formulate academic goals in conjunction with developing self-identity in a dynamic relationship that is influenced by their environment (Patterson, 1996).

Tinto (1987) incorporates student development into his theory on undergraduate retention. He also supports the idea of student development as non-linear despite certain stages of development being readily identifiable. Using Van Gennep's theory on the rites of passage in tribal societies as a conceptual framework, Tinto (1987) states that development has no real start or finish point. The transition students make from one academic community to another and one social community to another may occur simultaneously, consecutively or overlap. Failure to integrate, academically and socially, into the university community may result in voluntary withdrawal from the institution. He then describes these students who voluntarily withdraw from university in terms of

Durkheim's theory of suicide which suggests people who voluntarily take their own lives are normless within society and therefore feel no affiliation with it. Likewise, students who withdraw from university often do not share the same values and beliefs with the university community in which they find themselves and choose to leave. On the other hand, for those students who are a good match with their chosen institution the process of incorporation into the community is continual. Students are constantly re-examining their needs and wants, and in turn revisit their goals and formulate new ones. All during this time they are also redefining their identities as they work toward degree completion.

As academic goals change, it follows that advising is a service that needs to be repeatedly used by students to maximize the benefits found within the university environment. Advisors must understand that the intellectual and social changes that are taking place within students are necessary to enhance students' abilities to persist with degree completion. Therefore, advising plays a role in both student development and student retention if it can improve the quality of students' university experience and enhance students' abilities to survive and remain in the university environment. It follows that advising should not be limited to the first days, first weeks or even first year of students' degree programs. Rather, it should be part of an on-going "communicative process within the institution" (Andres, Hawkey & Andruske, 1996). Students need to be made aware of where to find the service and have easy access to it at any time in their degree program.

The Student

Recent literature describes today's student as an "evolving character" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p.17). This is supported by other literature as well that refers to students as "clients" (Egan, 1990, p.v), "consumers" (Burgar, 1994, p.43; Foot, 1996, p.156; Smith, 1991, p.14; Tinto, 1987, p.144) and "partners" (Kunin, 1996). The undergraduate population is increasing in ethnic diversity, its female membership is 56% and growing (Human Resources Development Canada, 1993/94), and the average undergraduate age is now 31 years (Centre for Educational Technology, 1996).

University students have primarily been described as traditional (Tinto, 1975) or non-traditional (Bean and Metzner, 1985). In his research on student retention, Tinto (1975) defined traditional students as those attending university full-time, 18 to 24 years old, living in residence and equally influenced by the academic and social environment of university. Non-traditional students, according to Bean and Metzner (1985), study part-time, are older than 24, live off campus and their primary concern is the academic offerings of universities. Non-traditional students' commitment to their degree programs are more influenced by variables outside the university environment, such as finances, employment obligations and family, than are traditional students.

Many of these characteristics are still found among some students. However, it has become increasingly difficult to assign students to one of these two simplistic definitions. Benjamin and Hollings (1995), through their study on the "Quality of Student Life," confirmed that students lives are "complex and multileveled" (p.579).

Understanding the complexity of individual lives is further confounded by shifting demographics, an uncertain Canadian economy and the federal policy on multiculturalism. The result is a heterogeneous student population (Gregor, 1992). It is a population in which gender roles, responsibilities and expectations are also continually being redefined. Certain fields, such as education, that have been dominated by women in the past are showing a declining rate of interest among women (Dey and Hurtado, 1995). Economist Roslyn Kunin (1996) predicts that as traditional blue collar jobs for men continue to disappear there will be an increase in the number of men pursuing careers formally dominated by women, such as nursing.

Along with changing demographics in the student population, rapidly rising costs of post-secondary education have placed increased pressure on universities to become more accountable for both their policies and practices. In this context Dey and Hurtado (1995) have suggested that the "relationship" (p.507) between students and universities must be "reciprocal and dynamic" (p.507). Therefore, it is no longer realistic or practical to view students in terms of traditional or non-traditional. Their role in today's university is far more complex and influential.

Changing demographics is also influencing how students and universities relate to one another. The current socioeconomic environment has created students who are seeking degree programs that will prepare them to meet the demands of an unpredictable social and economic environment. Students are determined to get good value for their financial and intellectual investment in a degree program. In order for universities to

continue to attract students they must provide quality programs with appropriate support services that meet students' needs.

Reconceptualizing students as educated consumers is more than rhetoric for many people. It is reality for those responsible for paying tuition fees. The Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education (Smith, 1991) describes the current environment as an "educational marketplace" (p.14). With massive tuition increases being predicted by institutions due to reductions in government funding, more degree granting institutions from which to choose, and an increased number of publications on the market evaluating and comparing universities' performances, students are shopping for the university that best meets their needs. In responding to the demands of potential students who want to make informed choices, the Commission (Smith, 1991) has advised universities to openly share their "priorities, spending pattern and achievements" (p.14). Once the choice has been made and the student is enrolled, it is reasonable to expect that they will continue to maintain vigilance over the quality of all aspects of their university experience.

The Advisor

For the purpose of this study an advisor is considered to be someone who in addition to dispensing academic advice also has the authority to make independent, discretionary decisions in the interpretation and application of policies and procedures. Two types of advisors meet these criteria. The first type are faculty members who

perform advising in addition to research and teaching. The second type are advisors that perform advising on a full-time basis (non-faculty). The latter group are also frequently referred to as professional advisors. What these two groups have in common is that at the same time that they are responsible for assisting students in fulfilling their goals, they are also obligated to support the objectives of the institution.

Recognizing the fit of the student to the institution and the institution to the student (Tinto, 1987) demands three things of advisors. First, that they have expertise in understanding and interpreting the rationale for policies and for implementing procedures. Second, that they are knowledgeable of student development and retention theory. Third, that they are able to synthesize these two obligations in performing their duties. What is described here is a “developmental adviser” (Crockett, 1985, p.248), someone whose purpose is to assist students in identifying life/career goals while developing an educational plan that will lead them to achieving those goals. Traveling along the path successfully is a shared responsibility in which the advisor’s role is to facilitate communication, coordinate course and career planning for students and review their academic progress, and involve other support services when needed.

Faculty Members as Advisors.

In his study of 20,000 students at 200 American institutions, Astin (1989) concluded that the more often students had personal contact with faculty, the higher their

satisfaction was with all aspects of their educational experience. Other literature (Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) also confirms that faculty are significant role models for undergraduates and that faculty norms, values and attitudes have an impact on persistence. Since faculty value educational attainment, the more students interact with faculty, the more likely they are to have this value reaffirmed if they already hold it or adopt it as a new value, thereby increasing their likelihood of integration and persistence.

In applying this general observation to advising, other research (Gordon, 1992) has determined that students found advising sessions with professors to be stimulating when the discussion is discipline focused but constrained when academic issues or life concerns are broached. Similar findings emerged from other studies (Crockett, 1985; Gomme, Hall & Murphy, 1993).

At the same time, Gordon (1992) also found that faculty members in increasing numbers are questioning why academic advising should be among their responsibilities. Unless a student is inquiring about the faculty member's discipline, many instructors do not understand how and why they should be relating to students in terms of advising.

The inability or unwillingness of some faculty to be providers of academic advising is a consequence of the reward system that exists in universities. Tenure and promotion are awarded to those whose research efforts bring prestige to the university through publication and procurement of funds (Gordon, 1992; Crockett, 1985).

According to the findings of the Commission (Smith, 1991), senior administrators at Canadian universities deny that such a situation exists here. However, faculty members

have confirmed that it is the reality. Student centered activities such as teaching receive second priority, and other functions such as advising take on an even lower priority.

Professional Advisors.

This is the first study to gather data on full-time academic advisors employed at Canadian universities. However, studies in the United States (Crockett, 1985; Gordon, Swenson, Spencer, Kline, Bogenschultz and Seeger, 1990) indicate that although faculty still do the majority of advising, the number of full-time advisors is increasing. Gordon et al. (1990) also found from their questionnaire, sent to 1,000 members of the National Association of Academic Advisors (NACADA), that as the number of advisors has grown so has their sense of a “professional identity” (p.62). Eighty-four percent considered themselves to be professionals and 53% were in favour of certification to facilitate legal recognition as professionals. Based on traditional and educational criteria for professions, Gordon et al. identified that NACADA would need to address a number of issues in order for academic advising to be certified as a profession. The organization would have to set standards in selection and training of advisors, define job titles and functions, self-impose standards of admission and performance and obtain legal recognition.

According to Crockett (1985), the advantages of employing professional advisors is that they can be selected based on their ability to serve effectively and their commitment to the advising process. The disadvantages to having professional advisors

is that while they may provide their service without bias toward any discipline, they may not be as knowledgeable about course content, and graduate and career possibilities as faculty. Crockett (1985) also found that professional advisors are required to assume a heavy load of advisees, forcing them to minimize the time spent with individual students.

Student (Peer) Advisors.

Peer advisors are worth mentioning in a review of literature on academic advising for the contribution they make in assisting other students with the transition into the university community. As a supplement to faculty and professional advising, senior undergraduate students when properly trained and supervised as peer advisors, become positive role models for other students (Crockett, 1985). Previous studies have shown some undergraduates who lack confidence in themselves and who are unsure of their future in university look to more senior students for direction (Astin, 1993; Elliott, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). The presence of peer advisors often makes approaching an advising office easier for other students (Chamberlain & Trigg, 1993). It has already been noted that the willingness and ability of students to access support services is significant in building persistence and retention.

Computers and Advising.

Computers are not advisors. Computers are simply a tool which provides both students and advisors with important factual information. Advising that improves the quality of the university experience requires a human touch.

Advising, the Undergraduate Experience and Retention

A good deal of literature reveals that the undergraduate experience is positively affected at institutions where there are supportive student personnel services in place (Andres, Andruske & Hawkey, 1996; Astin, 1993; Forrest, 1985; Headland & Jones, 1970; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987). Whether one subscribes to Astin's (1993) model of student involvement or Tinto's (1975, 1987) model of integration, or a combination of both, it seems that wherever concern and personal support is readily available to individual students, persistence to degree completion improves.

Astin (1993) theorizes that the amount of learning and development that students experience is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of their involvement in the university environment and that the educational effectiveness of policy or practice is related to their capacity to attract student involvement. It follows that academic advising is means to facilitate undergraduates' involvement in their university environment.

Tinto's (1975, 1987) theory of retention is based on the concept that the "fit" between students and their university environment will determine persistence or withdrawal from university. Students are described as arriving at university with a set of

characteristics, such as ethnicity, academic achievement and aptitude, and family support and income, that predispose them to a level of commitment to degree completion and to their institution. This initial commitment will affect students' ability to separate from previous academic and social communities, to work through a transition period and ultimately integrate into the university environment (Tinto, 1987). Successful academic and social integration into university may hinge on institutions' ability to develop policies and procedures that support this end (Gilbert, 1991).

Positive interaction with elements of the system leads to more and better integration in the institution and higher student retention. Conversely, negative experiences with the system reduce integration and contribute to students being marginalized and then withdrawing. Research by Pascarella (1985) and Tinto (1987) has determined that plans and goals made by students are frequently adjusted and readjusted according to their experiences with members and structures within the university.

When students feel satisfied and rewarded by their contact with faculty and staff at their institutions, their sense of belonging or "integration" as Tinto (1987) says, is greater. The nature and intensity of these encounters can be critical in influencing students' decisions to persist or withdraw. A shared sense of values with the formal and informal aspects of the university has been linked to greater retention, whereas negative encounters with members of the institution restrict integration into the university community and promote attrition.

Based on her study of 1,033 first-year university students in the United States, Metzner (1989) reported that high-quality advising has a positive impact on persistence

through its effect on better grades and satisfaction with university and a negative impact on withdrawal. These findings are supported by others (Forrest, 1985; Braxton, Duster & Pascarella, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Hartley (1987) found as did Metzner (1989) that poor advising contributed to attrition but the highest attrition rate was found among students who received no academic advising at all.

Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) claim that it is widely accepted that students must be active participants in their university environment to maximize their own growth. They also state it must be recognized that the university environment is also an “active force” that provides opportunities for change to which students must respond.

In a study of forty American institutions (Forrest, 1985) that controlled for students academic ability, it was found that nine that provided both comprehensive orientation and advising services had a graduation rate 9% higher than a similar group of nine colleges without these services. However, in designing programs and developing procedures, institutions need to be aware of the process of personal development that is taking place in all students and offer relevant advising at appropriate times. Program planning, discussion on the value of educational attainment, explanation of institutional policies and procedures, career planning and other university services will all be appropriate at different points for each student. This is the quality advising to which Metzner (1989) referred.

The Educational Environment

Chickering and Reisser (1993) identify eight major areas in which universities influence student development: (1) institutional objectives; (2) institutional size; (3) student-faculty relationships; (4) curriculum, teaching and evaluation; (5) residence; (6) faculty and administration; (7) friendships and student communities; (8) student development programs and services. Academic advising plays a pivotal role in two of these areas: 1 and 8.

As the most frequently used service by students (Ward, 1992), academic advising becomes one means by which students come to understand and accept institutional objectives. Therefore, having clear and consistent objectives supported by clear and consistent programs aids advisors in relaying institutional goals to students and affirms that the institution is seriously committed to those goals.

Clear objectives also assist students in understanding how institutional goals are relevant to their own goals. Learning how and why their institutions' policies, practices and programs work at the same time that they are developing their own academic and career goals, bestows a sense of awareness on students of the interdependence between themselves and their institutions. With this awareness students are able to better understand the reasons and purpose for attending a specific institution (Chickering 1993).

Tinto (1987) would describe this situation as the right “fit” between student and institution. The result is a positive institutional impact on the undergraduate experience.

In order for advising to facilitate this goal, institutions must be prepared to commit whatever financial resources, human resources and facilities that are necessary (Crockett, 1985; Guinn & Mitchell, 1986). The potential outcome in improved student satisfaction and persistence is the payoff for the institutions’ investment (Astin, 1993). A quality advising program will not be inexpensive. However, to attract and retain today’s sophisticated and complex students, those institutions that are providing quality services along with an exceptional academic experience in return for students intellectual and financial investment will be the ones that are more likely to fulfill their enrollment targets and ensure future government funding.

Summary

The literature indicates that programs, policies, services and people define the university environment. All are potential sources of influence on students’ experience and it is the experience that affects students’ persistence to degree completion. Based on the literature about undergraduate retention and development, it appears that academic advisors are in a position to be among the most knowledgeable university personnel on academic programs, individual students’ needs and institutional objectives (Habley, 1981). In this capacity advisors have the potential to link students and their university in a positive way. This establishes that advising can have a direct affect on students’

satisfaction with their university experience and an indirect affect on university retention rates.

The lack of information on how Canadian public universities are developing and implementing academic advising policies, and about those responsible for delivering advising programs and services suggests the need to evaluate the current situation. As universities are environments that provide both the “impetus and opportunities” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p.59) for change, they are also responsible for providing services that enable students to manage “through the periods of personal and intellectual conflict and disorientation that are thought to be necessary for change and development.” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p.59). Therefore, it is time to examine how academic advising is fulfilling its share of this responsibility.

CHAPTER 3

Design and Research Method

The Design

This study employed a survey research method. The instruments of data collection were a mailed questionnaire and follow-up telephone interviews. The mail questionnaire (Appendix A) and interview schedule (Appendix B) were developed for the purpose of determining current philosophy, practice and the status of academic advising in the Faculties of Arts at English-speaking Canadian public universities. The questionnaire mailed to key informants in these institutions' advising offices focused on what is taking place and why.

Mailing key informants a questionnaire was an efficient and economical method of surveying Arts advising offices across the country. The questionnaire was followed by tape recorded telephone interviews with respondents who volunteered to engage in further discussion on academic advising. Interviewing provided the opportunity to explore advising issues in greater depth.

The Sample

The Faculty of Arts was chosen for this study because at all universities it could be argued that Arts faces the biggest challenge, in comparison to other areas of the university such as the applied sciences, sciences or professional programs, in defining a role for itself that will meet both institutional and student goals. As a result, Arts advising personnel are one group who had become responsible for linking students and institutional goals through the undergraduate experience.

Universities providing decentralized advising through a Faculty of Arts or a combined Faculty of Arts and Sciences and those institutions offering advising through a centralized office were included. This provided a basis for comparison of data collected from universities where undergraduate programs are intended to lead to further studies (medical, professional or graduate programs) with data collected from universities where earning an undergraduate degree is the primary goal. Surveying advising offices at different types of universities across Canada revealed similarities and differences in practice.

All 41 (n=41) English-speaking Canadian public universities were included. No universities of this type were excluded. The decision to limit the study to universities whose language of instruction is English was based on the expertise and resources available. Time constraints and limited financial resources precluded French language universities from being part of this study because my first language is English. To include

the French language universities would have required the hiring of a translator to prepare and interpret the questionnaire results and interviews.

University-colleges, universities with religious affiliation, universities providing only distance study and community colleges each serve a unique role in society.¹ The programs and services they provide are guided by mandates and missions that are different from those of traditional universities. They were not included in this study as the role of academic advising at these institutions serves different purposes. Including them would have had a confounding effect on the study.

Questionnaires were sent to two participants in Arts advising offices at each English-speaking public university. The names and titles of individuals in the sample were obtained from each institution's public directory. This group consisted of faculty members and professional advisors. One questionnaire was sent to a senior administrator responsible for Arts advising services at each university. This was either a Dean, Associate Dean, Assistant Dean or Director responsible for the operational direction of advising services. The other questionnaire was sent to an academic advisor who also performs the function daily.

These participants were identified as key informants for the study because they were well informed on the subject of academic advising. All had a thorough understanding of policies and procedures and were responsible for implementing them. Their knowledge and experience made them the best people to "articulate...and...reflect"

¹ For a comprehensive account of the current state of Canada's community colleges system see Dennison, J. D.(Ed.). (1995). Canada's community colleges at the crossroads. Vancouver: UBC Press.

(Morse, 1994) on academic advising issues and practices. They were also likely to be the most motivated and willing advising personnel to make time for the study's questionnaire and follow-up interview.

Two questionnaires were sent to each university for the purpose of ensuring as high as possible institutional return rate. The 41 institutions were:

British Columbia

Simon Fraser University
University of British Columbia
University of Victoria
University of Northern British Columbia

Alberta

University of Alberta
University of Calgary
University of Lethbridge

Saskatchewan

University of Regina
University of Saskatchewan

Manitoba

Brandon University
University of Manitoba
University of Winnipeg

Ontario

Brock University
Carleton University
Lakehead University
Laurentian University of Sudbury
McMaster University
Nipissing University
Queen's University
Trent University
University of Guelph
University of Ottawa
University of Toronto
University of Waterloo
University of Western Ontario
University of Windsor
Wilfrid Laurier University
York University

Quebec

Bishop's University
Concordia University
McGill University

New Brunswick

Mount Allison University
St. Thomas University
University of New Brunswick

Nova Scotia

Acadia University
Dalhousie University
Mount Saint Vincent University
St. Francis Xavier University
St. Mary's University

Prince Edward Island

University of Prince Edward Island

Newfoundland

Memorial University of
Newfoundland

Research Method

Two instruments were used to acquire information on academic advising: 1) a questionnaire was mailed to 82 academic advisors in the Faculty of Arts at 41 English-speaking public universities, and 2) personal interviews with nine current academic advisors.

Mail Questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire was based on recommendations by Creswell (1994), Gray and Guppy (1994), Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1993), Morse (1994) and Schumacher and McMillan (1993). Close-ended (structured) and open-ended (semi-structured) questions were used, and space was provided for respondents to make additional comments.

A pilot study was done with two academic advisors from another faculty. Their feedback was useful in clarifying the formatting and wording of the questionnaire. They also contributed alternative variables for some closed-ended questions.

The strategy for implementing the mail survey was also based on the recommendations of Gray and Guppy (1994) and Schumacher and McMillan (1993). In December 1996, a questionnaire was mailed to 82 key informants at 41 English Canadian public universities. An accompanying cover letter (Appendix C) established the credibility of the researcher and the study by explaining what the study was about, why it

was being done and who would benefit from the findings. The informants were also given an estimated time it would take to complete the questionnaire and they were assured of confidentiality. A postage-paid, return-addressed envelope was included with the questionnaire along with a form that was to be filled out and returned by informants willing to participate in a taped telephone interview.

In January 1997, a reminder notice was sent restating the significance of the study and the importance of each response. In February, a second reminder in the form of a telephone call was made to those who had not yet responded.

Interviews

Respondents to the questionnaire were invited to participate in a follow-up interview that would entail more in-depth discussion on advising issues. Nine interviewees were strategically chosen from among fourteen volunteers. Interviewees came from different size universities in different regions of the country and they provided a breadth of opinion from among those who volunteered.

The interviews were conducted by telephone and all were tape recorded. The investigator, whose professional background may match the background of some informants, was the only interviewer. The interview schedule was prepared in advance. All participants were given pseudonyms on the transcripts.

The Analysis

SPSS 7.0, a comprehensive statistical software program, was used for data analysis because of its capability to manage all steps in the numerical analysis process. Data were summarized into frequencies and descriptive statistics. This output was organized into tables suitable for publication. The interview data were interposed with the quantitative data. Respondent comments were used to elaborate on the descriptive statistics.

Limitations of the Study

Any study must be evaluated with its limitations taken into consideration. This study is no exception. It is limited by its perspective, its response rate and the investigator's personal biases.

The study presents only the perspective of academic advisors on advising for Arts students. Two other perspectives, from students and central administration, are needed in order to develop a complete understanding of the function and purpose of advising in today's university.

The response rate of 43% (37 of 82 individuals) represents 73% of the eligible institutions. The low individual response rate affects the generalizability of the demographic data collected on academic advisors. However, establishing a profile of academic advisors was not the primary intent of the study. The main purpose of the study

was to determine institutional practice. The number of respondents represents almost three-quarters of universities contacted.

I am an academic advisor and this association with the research topic has been the motivation for conducting this study. Enthusiasm for the topic may inherently carry with it certain biases. However, my interest did not embrace any particular outcome as the preferred outcome from the study. My goal was to identify what is occurring in advising offices and discuss the implications for students and policy makers.

CHAPTER 4

Arts Academic Advising Within the University

The questionnaire was organized into eight sections to acquire information in four areas: (1) to find out where Arts academic advising units fit into the university structure and who is advising; (2) to determine Arts academic advisors' duties and responsibilities; (3) to ascertain current academic advising practice for Arts students; and (4) to discover advisors perceptions on the role of academic advising. An analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaires and interviews constitutes the remainder of this chapter and the following chapter.

Questionnaire Responses

Of the 82 questionnaires mailed to 41 universities, 37 completed questionnaires were returned, representing 73% of eligible universities. As the purpose of the study was to determine academic advising practice for Arts students at each institution the response rate was reasonable. For the analysis, when two individuals responded from one institution the data were collapsed into one case so as not to skew results.

Academic Advising and Organizational Fit

Questionnaire respondents indicated that at the majority of universities, academic advising for Arts students was a Faculty responsibility. Key positions to which the staff of advising units report, the types of units that deliver academic advising and the funding of advising units mainly occurred within the Faculties of Arts.

Reporting Structure

Organizational charts provided by questionnaire respondents indicated where their academic advising unit fit into the structure of their university. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Table 1. Positions to which Advising Units Report

Position	# Universities	% Universities
Dean/Principal of Faculty	10	33
Associate/Vice Dean of Faculty	5	17
Registrar	4	13
Associate Dean of Student Services	3	10
VP Academic	3	10
VP Academic/Student Services	1	3
Dean of Student Services	1	3
Dean of Student Services/Registrar	1	3
Associate Dean of Student Services	1	3
Division/Department Chair	1	3
Total	30	100 ²

² Percentages are rounded. Total may not be precisely 100%.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of advising units report a higher academic authority, such as a Vice-President Academic, a Dean, an Associate Dean or a Division/Department Chair. Of these units, over half reported to a Dean (or Principal). Approximately one-third (32%) reported to a higher authority in student services, such as the Dean of Student Services, Associate Dean of Student Services or Registrar. Only one advising unit reported to a Vice-President Academic and Student Services, a single position with authority over both an academic and service area.

Units Responsible for Academic Advising

Table 2 provides a detailed summary of questionnaire results on the types of units responsible for academic advising. At almost half of the universities (47%), academic advising was carried out by a Faculty Office and by individual faculty members within departments. Again, just one institution reported that a Faculty Advising Office only was responsible for all academic advising.

At the remaining universities a variety of combinations of units performed academic advising. The combinations were made up of two or more of a Faculty Advising Office, faculty members in departments, a Central Advising Office (serving all degree programs), the Registrar's Office, Student Services Office, or Counseling Services. Interestingly, all combinations had a Faculty presence, either by utilizing a Faculty Advising Office or faculty department members.

Table 2. Types of Units Responsible for Academic Advising

Advising Units	# Universities	% Universities
Faculty Advising Office (FAO) & Departments (Dept.)	14	47
Central Advising Office (CAO), FAO & Dept.	5	17
CAO & Dept.	3	10
CAO & FAO	1	3
FAO, Dept. & Registrar's Office (RO)	1	3
CAO, FAO, Dept. & RO	1	3
FAO	1	3
FAO, Dept. & Counseling Services	1	3
FAO, Dept., RO & Student Services Office (SSO)	1	3
Dept. & RO	1	3
Dept. & SSO	1	3
Total	30	100

Amount of Advising Done by Each Unit

The percentage of academic advising done by each type of advising unit also reinforced that the advising of Arts students was a Faculty responsibility when compared to the percentage of advising done by other units, such as a Central Advising Office, Registrar's Office, Counseling Services or Student Services Office (see Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of Academic Advising done by Each Unit (as Identified by Questionnaire Respondents)

Unit	% of Advising	# Universities	% Universities
Faculty Advising Office	51	26	87
Individual Faculty Members	40	28	93
Registrar	40	4	13
Central Advising Office	36	10	33
Student Services/Affairs Office	18	2	7
Counseling Services	10	1	3

At the majority of universities, Faculty Advising Office staff and individual faculty members were the predominant providers of academic advice.

Respondents' Advising Units

Table 4 shows that almost half of questionnaire respondents (43%) reported that they belonged to an advising unit in a Faculty, School or College. Another one-third of respondents (32%) indicated that they worked in a Central Advising Office.

Table 4. Respondents' Advising Unit

Unit to which Respondents Belong	# Universities	% Universities
Faculty/School	16	43
Central Advising Office	12	32
Registrar's Office	6	16
Individual Department	2	7
Student Services/Affairs Office	1	3
Total	37	100

In light of current literature on the link between student development and retention, which attests that students formulate academic goals simultaneously with developing self-identity within the university community, it was interesting that only one university identified academic advising as a function and responsibility of a Student Development Office.

Funding

Questionnaire results showed that the majority of academic advising units (60%) were funded from a Faculty/School budget and 27% through Student Services/Affairs. A few respondents (10%) replied that funds for their unit were provided by a Registrar's budget. Only one respondent indicated that no funding was provided for academic advising services (see Table 5).

Table 5. Advising Units' Primary Source of Funding

Funding Source	# Respondents	% Respondents
Faculty/school Budget	18	60
Student Services/Student Affairs Budget	8	27
Registrar's Budget	3	10
Receives No Funding	1	3
Total	30	100

The issue of funding prompted additional comments from questionnaire respondents. Several advisors conveyed a sense of frustration at inadequate financial resources. The following comments were provided by questionnaire respondents, indicating that some advisors perceived that administration was not committed to supporting academic advising to its maximum potential:

Administration makes "statements" and "policies" about support for academic advising as an important service for students but does not provide resources to have such services delivered.

Administration is verbally supportive of advising. Financially - I conclude, not.

Although advising is viewed as a necessity, it is seen as an unfortunate necessity, as it absorbs resources which might otherwise be directed toward teaching and research.

Advisors' comments reconfirm the findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian University Education (Smith, 1991) that government's inadequate funding of universities is severely felt by non-academic personnel and services. The majority of interviewees expressed a desire to be more "proactive" in their role as an academic advisor. At the same time, they described this desire as being limited by a lack of resources. According to other studies (Crocket 1985; Guinn & Mitchell, 1986, Astin, 1993), adequate investment in financial resources, human resources and facilities is required for universities to reap the potential benefits that student satisfaction has on retention.

Fees for Services

When asked if their advising units charged students fees for any of their services, almost all questionnaire respondents (93%) stated no fees were charged. Only one institution reported a fee of \$35.00 for issuing letters of permission for students to take courses at other institutions and a fee of \$25.00 for adding or dropping courses after published deadlines. One other unit reported charging a small fee for photocopying documents for students. Even though inadequate funding was identified as a problem by questionnaire respondents and interviewees, charging students who use advising services had not been used as a means to make up some of the shortfall.

University Mission and Mandate

Table 6 depicts questionnaire results that at over half of the institutions (53%), the university mission and mandate is explained to “no one” in advising units. Barely, one quarter of advising units (28%) provide new members with an explanation of the mission and mandate, and all who received such explanation were identified as either professional advisors or non-academic management level staff in the advising unit.

Table 6. University Mission/Mandate Explained to New Advising Staff

Advising Staff Receiving an Explanation of the University Mission/Mandate	# Universities	Valid % Universities
No One	16	55
All New Members	8	28
Some New Members	5	17
Total	29	100
Valid Responses 29	Missing Responses 1	

It is apparent that advisors are ideally situated to link university goals and student goals. However, Ward (1992) points out that in order for advisors to be effective they must have expertise in understanding how rules and regulations support their university's mission and mandate. However, echoing the above trend, in this study, 18% of advisors stated that their advising unit had its own mission statement.

Arts Advisors' Academic and Professional Background

It has been established in the literature that advisors are influential in the undergraduate experience. The academic and professional backgrounds of advisors were also investigated to determine how they were prepared for their role.

Credentials

Individual respondents to the questionnaire were asked to identify the highest academic credential they held. The results confirmed that Arts academic advisors were well educated (Table 7). All advisors (100%) held at least one degree and 71% held two or more degrees.

Table 7. Highest Credential Held by Academic Advisors

Credential	# Respondents	% Respondents
Bachelor Degree	11	30
Masters Degree	15	41
Doctorate	11	30
Total	37	100

Discipline

Table 8 shows the discipline backgrounds of Arts advisors who completed the questionnaire. Thirty-five percent of advisors indicated their academic background was in humanities, 30% indicated a professional background in law, education or social work,

and 22% had a social science background. The remaining advisors (14%) had a science degree.

Table 8. Discipline Background of Advisors

Discipline	# Respondents	% Respondents
Humanities	13	35
Professional	11	30
Social Science	8	22
Science	5	14
Total	37	100

Prior Job

Table 9 provides a summary of the types of jobs these same advisors held prior to becoming an academic advisor. Almost two-thirds had moved from one of two university areas into advising. Just over one-third of respondents indicated that they were a manager or administrator of another university department or program prior to becoming an advisor. Another third stated their previous position was as an academic instructor.

Table 9. Job Held Prior to becoming an Advisor

Previous Job	# Respondents	Valid % Respondents
University manager/administrator	13	36
Academic/university instructor	11	31
University clerical	3	8
University student	3	8
Secondary school teacher	2	6
Lawyer	1	3
Social Worker	1	3
Counselor	1	3
Health Educator	1	3
Total	36	100
Valid Responses 36		Missing Responses 1

Related Experience

When asked to describe any related experience they had acquired prior to becoming an advisor, 87% of questionnaire respondents provided at least one example of a previous university job. The top three examples of related experience were university instruction, department advising and personal counseling and admissions. Table 10 summarizes the responses.

Table 10. Related Experience Prior to becoming an Advisor

Related Experience	# Resp.	Valid % Resp.
University instruction	7	23
University department advising	5	16
Personal counseling	5	16
University admissions advising	4	13
University tutoring	3	10
No related experience	3	10
Administration non-academic university area	2	7
Serving on university academic committees	1	3
Customer service	1	3
Total	31	100
Valid Responses 31.		Missing Responses 6

Advising Experience

Arts advisors indicated that they have considerable advising experience. It appears that many have made a long-term commitment to the job and the Faculty of Arts as 42% of questionnaire respondents reported being academic advisors for more than ten years (see Table 11) and 33% reported advising at their current institution for over ten years (see Table 12).

Table 11. Number of Years Advising

Total Number of Years Advising	# Resp.	Valid % Resp.
1 - 5	11	31
6 - 10	10	28
11 - 15	5	14
16 - 20	5	14
21 - 25	4	11
over 25	1	3
Total	36	100

Valid Responses 36

Missing Responses 1

Table 12. Number of Years Advisors have been Advising
at their Current University

Number of Years Advising at Current University	# Respondents	Valid % Respondents
1 - 5	15	42
6 - 10	9	25
11 - 15	4	11
16 - 20	4	11
21 - 25	4	11
Total	36	100

Valid Responses 36

Missing Responses 1

Training

Considering the responsibilities of being an academic advisor and the role the position plays in fulfilling students and institutional needs, it was surprising that at 57% of universities that participated in the study, questionnaire respondents indicated that Arts advisors do not receive training prior to assuming their duties (Table 13).

Table 13. Initial Training Provided for Academic Advisors

	#	%
Initial training provided?	Respondents	Respondents
No	17	57
Yes	13	43
Total	30	100

Of those who received training, the most common length of time was one month (see Table 14).

Table 14. Length of Initial Training Provided for Academic Advisors who Receive Training

	#	Valid %
Length of Initial Training	Respondents	Respondents
One month	5	63
Three months	1	13
One year	2	25
Total	8	100
Valid Responses 8		Missing Responses 5

Table 15 provides a summary of the type of initial training reported by questionnaire respondents. Although respondents who received training described it in slightly different words, 85% described what is known as “on the job” training. That is, no one mentioned experiencing any sort of formal training, such as courses in student development or the purpose of higher education, to prepare them for their position.

Table 15. Type of Initial Training Provided for Academic Advisors

Type of Initial Training	# Respondents	Valid % Respondents
On the job	7	64
On the job and university calendar	2	18
On the job, calendar and advising manual	1	9
Calendar	1	9
Total	11	100
Valid Responses 11	Missing Responses 2	

Respondents to the questionnaire and interviewees expressed that they were self-conscious of the lack of formal training in their background. This is understandable in a university environment which is the epitome of "formal training" of the mind and where the people surrounding advisors are immersed in such training. The following comments from questionnaire respondents were typical of several received on the topic of training:

I think there should be special training for advisors as they come in.

As a university keen on retention, [this university] stresses advising but puts little funding, training or expertise into it.

In the follow-up interview, only one interviewee predicted that this would change in the near future with the introduction of an advising program within a year that would include training for faculty, professional and peer advisors.

Questionnaire respondents were asked only to provide information on the initial training they received as an academic advisor, however, four interviewees also mentioned the importance of professional development for advisors. All four stated that it was not possible to effectively serve students without upgrading their own knowledge

in student development and policy administration. "Cross training" with other student service personnel, such as career and personal counselors, was recommended. One advisor succinctly described the situation: "We are limited in what we do because we don't have the formal background [in student development.]" Another advisor described all aspects of the university environment, including students, administration and policies, as constantly changing, and therefore it was critical to be on top of the latest developments.

Performance Evaluation

Just over half of questionnaire respondents indicated that they do not undergo performance evaluation as advisors (see Table 16). This is surprising given the potential impact advisors have on students' undergraduate experience and on university retention.

Table 16. Academic Advisors and Job Evaluation

	#	Valid %
Performance Evaluated Periodically	Resp.	Resp.
No	16	55
Yes	13	45
Total	29	100

Valid Responses 29

Missing Responses 1

All questionnaire respondents who underwent evaluation said that it occurred on an annual basis. Table 17 is a compilation of ten criteria for performance evaluation

provided by advisors. The criteria spanned academic knowledge, management skills and personal development. Almost equal in the frequency of responses was knowledge of academic policies (including procedures, rules and regulations), problem-solving skills, and setting and meeting goals.

Table 17. Criteria (as Provided by Questionnaire Respondents) for Job Evaluation

Criteria	# Respondents	% Respondents
Knowledge of academic policies, procedures, rules and regulations	5	39
Problem-solving skills	4	31
Setting and meeting goals	4	31
Initiative	3	23
Interpersonal skills	2	15
Time management	2	15
Productivity	2	15
Student satisfaction	1	8
Budgeting	1	8
Stress Management	1	8

Comparison Between Types of Universities

The data collected from universities where Arts undergraduate programs are intended to lead to further studies and from universities where earning the degree is the primary goal provided a basis of comparison for where academic advising fits into the university structure and for who is doing advising.

Considering a p (probability) value of less than .05 to be a significant difference, Chi-square tests indicated that no significant differences occurred between the types of universities with regard to where academic advising for Arts students fit into the university structure. Also, no significant difference between universities where undergraduate programs are intended to lead to further studies and universities where undergraduate programs are focused on that degree were found in the units responsible for advising, the percentage of advising done by these units and the key position to which advising at the two types of universities. The only facet that produced a statistical difference was the funding of advising units. That is, 43% of advising units were funded through a Faculty/school budget at universities where programs are designed to lead to further studies. In comparison, at universities where programs are mainly at the undergraduate level, only 17% of Arts advising units funded through the same budget (χ^2 9.3, $p < .05$). This finding was surprising as it was expected that a higher percentage of units at universities that focused on undergraduate programs would have been funded through a faculty/school budget and that a smaller percentage of units at universities directing their efforts to preparing students for further studies would have been funded through the same budget.

A statistically significant difference (χ^2 .08, $p < .10$) occurred in the percentage of advising being done by a Central Advising Office at the two types of universities. At the universities where undergraduate programs are intended to lead to further studies the percentage of advising done by a Central Advising Office is 30%. In comparison, at

universities where programs are concentrated at the undergraduate level, the percentage of academic advising done by a Central Advising Office is 70%.

The results of questions on Arts advisors' academic and professional backgrounds were also subjected to Chi-square tests. Tests revealed that results in these areas were not significantly different indicating that Arts advisors at both types of universities were not likely to have different backgrounds for the job, academically and professionally.

Summary

Results of the questionnaire showed that at the majority of English speaking public universities, academic advising for Arts students fit into the university structure as a Faculty responsibility. Most of advising units reported to a higher academic authority, such as a Dean, Associate Dean or Department Chair. Most academic advising is performed in Faculty Advising Offices and in Faculty departments by individual faculty members. Similarly, respondents stated that Faculty Advising Office staff and individual faculty members performed the most advising. The majority indicated their advising unit was funded through a Faculty budget.

Despite the close relationship between the Faculty and advising units, at most universities advisors were not being informed of their university's mission and mandate. Only a few advising units had their own mission statement.

Investigating advisors' academic backgrounds revealed that they were well educated. All had earned at least one degree and the majority have two or more. Most

had an academic background in Humanities or a professional field, such as Social Work, Education and Law. Somewhat fewer advisors had a Social Science background. A smaller number declared their background in Science.

“On the job” experience prepared academic advisors for their advising positions. The majority had not received any formal training for the position, and few underwent performance evaluation. Most advisors held other university positions prior to becoming an academic advisor and even more had a related job in their work background. Many advisors had previously managed another university department or program. One-third were also instructors. Arts advisors indicated they had a good deal of academic advising experience. The majority have been advising more than six years and most have been advising at their current institution a similar amount of time.

Chi-square tests revealed that there were no significant differences with regard to where academic advising for Arts students fits into the university organization, nor where there significant differences in who is performing advising and their academic and professional backgrounds. However, test indicated there was likely to be a significant difference in how the two types of universities funded advising units and in the percentage of advising done by Central Advising Offices.

CHAPTER 5

Arts Advising Responsibilities and Practice

Academic Advisors' Responsibilities

The responsibilities of arts advisors were examined in the context of the range of duties they perform and the extent of authority they have to carry out their duties. The intent was to determine the scope and depth of responsibilities. According to respondents, their responsibilities focused on the areas of academic planning and related functions, outreach activities, and liaison duties.

Academic Planning and Related Duties

Results of the questionnaire produced a list of ten primary duties for academic advisors (Table 18). At the top of the list are program planning with students, and explaining academic policies and procedures to students, the public, faculty and staff. These activities are performed by Arts advisors at 100% of universities. In addition, to these duties, advisors at two-thirds (67%) of institutions indicated they contacted students

who are at risk academically, determined that students have met all degree requirements in order to graduate and reviewed students' records for promotion to the next level of study. A similar number explained non-academic policies (e.g., sexual harassment) to students.

Table 18. Academic Advisors' Duties

Duties	# Universities	% Universities
Program planning activities with students	30	100
Explain academic policies and procedures to students	30	100
Explain policies and procedures to the public	29	97
Explain policies/procedures to faculty and staff in other areas	28	93
Contact students at risk academically	20	67
Determine students have met degree requirements	19	63
Review students' records for promotion	18	60
Explain non-academic policies and procedures to students	16	53
Assist in resolving student-instructor conflict	15	50

Arts advisors at 50% of universities assisted in resolving student-instructor conflict. All advisors who reported that they performed this function stated that their involvement took on some form of mediation for the purpose of, as one advisor indicated, helping both sides "through the maze of rules and regulations of the university."

I anticipated that program planning with students would be mentioned by all respondents. Therefore, questionnaire respondents were asked to provide additional details on the types of planning activities taking place (Table 19). At virtually all universities, planning revolved around five main activities. Arts students received

assistance with course selection and scheduling, choosing a specialization, interpreting degree requirements, and discovering special learning opportunities (such as studying abroad). It was much less common for students to receive assistance in preparing for other programs.

Table 19. Program Planning Activities that Academic Advisors Perform with Students

Program Planning Activities	# Universities	% Universities
Assist with selection of courses	30	100
Assist with the selection of a specialization	30	100
Explain degree requirements	29	97
Assist with scheduling courses	27	90
Identify/explain special learning opportunities	25	83
Assist with planning for other programs	12	40

Extent of Advisors' Authority

Table 20 portrays the extent of authority that Arts advisors had in making discretionary decision in four different areas: (1) rules and regulations; (2) admissions decisions; (3) academic standing; and (4) transfer credit.

Questionnaire respondents reported that Arts academic advisors had the greatest degree of authority in the area of rules and regulations. Results revealed that 87% of advisors had the authority (either entirely or in part) to apply discretion when making

decisions that affect students' academic programs. Only thirteen percent of respondents indicated that advisors at their institutions had no authority in this area.

Somewhat fewer advisors' had authority to make discretionary decisions on students' appeals regarding academic standing. Still, at the majority of universities (59%), Arts advisors were able to exercise some level authority to act in a discretionary manner in the assignment of students' academic standing. Yet, at many universities (40%) Arts advisors had no authority to make discretionary decisions on academic standing.

Similar results were obtained when Arts advisors' authority in the area of admission decisions was investigated. At just over half of universities (54%), Arts advisors made discretionary decisions on appeals regarding applicants' admission status. At the remaining universities, Arts advisors were not making discretionary decisions on admissions appeals.

Table 20. Extent to Which Academic Advisors have Authority to Make Discretionary Decisions

Area of Authority	Extent of Authority			
	Sole Authority	Some Sole Authority / Some Consultation Required	Authority in Consultation with a Supervisor	No Authority
	% Resp.	% Resp.	% Resp.	% Resp.
Rules and regulations	27	57	3	13
Student appeals on academic standing	10	46	3	40
Student appeals on admissions decisions	7	40	7	47
Student appeals on transfer credit	13	37	3	47

The last area of advisors' authority that the questionnaire addressed was in the assignment of transfer credit. Advisors at 53% of universities have sole authority, some authority or authority in consultation with their supervisor to make discretionary decisions on students' appeals regarding transfer credit; nearly half (47%) do not have any authority to make such decisions.

Based on these findings, it is clear that advisors have the potential to significantly affect students' academic careers. Interviewees were well aware of the influential role they play in some students' lives. As one advisor who was interviewed put it:

The role of an advisor should not be taken lightly...[it] is highly skilled, highly knowledgeable. And due to that high skill and knowledge, the academic advisor has a lot of control and power in affecting student development...you are ultimately the person in charge of making student academic development and achievement happen.

Another interviewee held a different viewpoint. He strongly believed that professors are the people who have the most profound effect on student development and achievement but that the student is ultimately in charge. However, it cannot be argued that for those students who seek advising and rely on the judgment of an advisor for direction, that judgment can alter students' academic careers and therefore indirectly affect career and life goals.

Along with authority in interpreting and implementing rules and regulations, one interviewee believed it was his responsibility to become involved in the "process of keeping the rules changing." He explained academic advisors were in a unique position

that often enables them to be the first to observe when rules and regulations are no longer effective or relevant. As the link between student and faculty and student and the broader university, he was committed to suggesting and initiating changes in policy and procedure as needed.

Outreach Activities

Arts advisors performed two types of outreach activities. One type involved contacting potential and current student and the other type targets the broader university community and the public.

Initiating Contact with Students.

Based on the findings of previous research (Hedland & Jones, 1970; Tinto, 1987; Gilbert, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Forrest, 1995), the earlier students receive assistance in integrating into the university environment the more likely they are to complete their degree.

Questionnaire responses indicated that most advisors were involved with outreach activities involving contacting students at different times in their programs. The results are shown in Table 21. Orientation sessions for the first-year of university studies were mentioned most frequently by respondents as the point at which they initiated contact with students. Over half of advising units (59%) have chosen this as the opportune time

to begin to develop a relationship with students. Another 31% of units initiate contact at an earlier stage, while potential students are still in secondary school. A small percentage (7%) of advising units delay contact until students enter third-year, or when it is time to declare a specialization. One advisor reported contacting elementary school students.

Table 21. Point at Which Academic Advisors Initiate Contact with Students

Point of Contact	# of U.	Valid % U.
Orientation to first-year of university studies	17	59
Secondary school	9	31
Third-year, when students declare their specialization	2	7
Elementary school	1	3
Total	29	100
Valid Responses 29		Missing Responses 1

The three main methods of initiating contact with students were through mailing out literature on the BA program, by inviting potential students to visit campus and by advisors visiting other institutions (Table 22). At the time of the questionnaire, 30% of advising units were also contacting students via an Arts web site.

Table 22. Methods of Initial Contact with Students

Method of Initial Contact	# Universities	% Universities
Mail out of literature	20	67
Students invited to visit campus	19	63
Advisors visit other institutions	17	57
Web site on the Internet	9	30
Mail out of a video	2	7
Mail out of computer disc/CD-ROM	1	3
Academic workshops for current students	1	3

Interviewees communicated that advisors initiated contact with students primarily for one of two reasons. One group of advisors stated that contacting students assisted in the transition process into university and made students aware of advising as an important support service. The other group of advisors echoed this belief and added one other dimension to our understanding of why advisors initiate contact with students. That is, they also saw as their responsibility as an obligation to provide students with assistance in the transition out of their undergraduate program. This included helping students prepare for a graduate program, professional program or the world of work. In this respect, one interviewee described this approach as academic advising "assigning itself an expanded horizon."

Interviewees also revealed that a number of advising units were developing projects to reach students in other ways and at other times during their degree program. One interviewee stated that in the past her university emphasized contacting new students and assisting them with the transition from high school or college into university. However, recently her advising unit spearheaded an initiative that encourages students to formulate links between academic, personal and career goals. Like many universities, all of these services are already available but operate independently. She explained that the plan at her university is to continue to contact students throughout their degree program and provide them with a cohesive set of workshops and learning opportunities, such as cooperative education, that will facilitate their transition through university and into the world of employment.

Two other interviewees described plans currently underway at each of their universities to complement their advising process with computerized degree “audit” systems. This would allow students to monitor their own progress toward degree completion. Not only do these audit systems tell students what courses and requirements are done, they also let them know what is left to be done. The more sophisticated programs also enable students to create “what if” scenarios. For instance, if an English major was considering changing their major to Economics, the program would let them know the additional number and types of courses required to graduate. Neither interviewee suggested technological improvements would replace face to face advising. Each advisor noted a computerized degree audit system was a tool that empowered students with more knowledge of program requirements enabling them to make independent decisions. In other words the information technology would be used to allow students to take control of their own programs.

Although some advisors indicated they are making efforts to maintain contact with students throughout their degree programs, other comments such as, “We only see a fraction of our students. We don’t have the resources to see everybody” imply that some advisors’ current workload prevented such initiatives.

Liaison.

The list of advisors’ duties confirmed that advisors’ responsibilities focus on student needs but are not limited to this area. Advisors routinely acted as representatives

of their Faculty and degree program, communicating with faculty and staff in other areas and with the public.

Table 23 shows, according to questionnaire respondents, that at the majority of institutions (88%), liaison work was done by advisors within their own university to promote the BA program. At 71% of institutions advisors performed liaison work outside the university. This entailed traveling to high schools, colleges, other universities, career and education fairs as representatives of their Faculty of Arts and degree programs. Although a substantial number of advisors performed liaison work either within their own university or outside of it, far fewer advisors did both. Liaison was done by Arts advisors both within and outside their at only one-third of institutions.

Table 23. Liaison Duties Performed Inside and Outside the University

	Inside the University	Outside the University	Inside & Outside the University
Liaison Duties	% Universities	%Universities	% Universities
Yes	88	71	33
No	12	29	77
Total	100	100	100

Other Duties

Advisors performed other duties in their official capacity as academic advisors and on a voluntary basis in other areas of the university. The former involved training of other staff members; the latter entailed serving on committees.

Training Other Staff

Questionnaire results indicated that at 57% of institutions arts advisors were responsible for training other advising staff. In half of the units where advisors trained others, the trainees were professional advisors. At the remaining universities, trainees included professional advisors, faculty members, staff and peer advisors (Table 24).

Table 24. Positions that Advisors are Responsible for Training

Positions	# Universities	% Universities
Professional advisors	8	47
Professional advisors, student (peer) advisors, secretarial/clerical staff	2	12
Professional advisors and secretarial/clerical staff	2	12
Student (peer) advisors	2	12
Professional advisors, student (peer) advisors, secretarial/clerical, faculty	1	6
Professional advisors, secretarial/clerical and faculty	1	6
Professional advisors and student (peer) advisors	1	6
Total	17	100

Committees

Questionnaire respondents revealed that Arts advisors also participated in university life beyond their advising responsibilities. At 70% of institutions advisors sat on various university committees that can be categorized into one of five types: academic; administrative; awards; equity; or orientation. Table 25 displays the

percentages of advisors serving on each type of committee. Appendix D provides a complete list of committees mentioned.

Table 25. University Committees on Which Advisors Sit

Committees	# of Universities	% of Universities
Academic	21	57
Administrative	11	30
Awards	7	19
Equity	7	19
Orientation	3	8

Academic Advising Practice

Academic advising practice was investigated from several aspects: (1) hours of operation; (2) level of advising and support staff; (3) methods of delivering academic advice; and (4) level of student involvement.

Hours of Operation

Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate the daily hours of operation for their advising units during a twelve month period to determine when students were able to access advising services. A distinct pattern of operation emerged for September through April. Table 26 provides a detailed account of advising units hours for this

period showing that throughout the Fall and Winter, when most students are on campus, advising hours were consistent.

Table 26. Advising Hours per Day	
September - April	
Monday - Friday	% of Universities
11.0	3
10.5	3
10.0	3
8.0	33
7.5	7
7.0	17
6.5	3
6.0	7
5.0	7
4.0	7

Almost all units (90%) remain open to students the same number of hours each day during this period. One-third of units are open eight hours per day, while a small percentage (10%) are open longer. Almost half (47%) of advising units are open less than eight hours per day. Among these units, the number of hours that students may access advising range from four hours per day to seven and half hours per day. Across all Arts advising units, hours do not vary by day of the week or by month for the eight month period. However, during the Spring and Summer months, some advising units reduced their hours of operation while two units added hours on the weekend.

May through August, advising hours were reduced at some universities. For example, Table 27 shows that from Monday to Thursday, during May, no advising unit

was open longer than 10.5 hours per day. Table 28 indicates that on Fridays no unit was open longer than eight hours per day.

Table 27. Advising Hours per Day, May through August (Monday - Thursday)

May		June		July		August	
Hours Mon.-Thur.	% U.	Hours Mon.-Thur.	% U.	Hours Mon.-Thur.	% U.	Hours Mon.-Thur.	% U.
10.5	3	11.0	3	11.0	3	11.0	3
10.0	3	10.5	3	10.5	3	10.5	3
8.0	37	10.0	3	10.0	3	10.0	3
7.5	2	8.0	33	8.0	30	8.0	30
7.0	17	7.5	7	7.5	10	7.5	10
6.0	2	7.0	13	7.0	13	7.0	13
5.5	3	6.5	3	6.5	3	6.5	7
5.0	2	6.0	7	6.0	7	6.0	7
4.0	2	5.5	3	5.5	3	5.0	7
		5.0	7	5.0	7	4.0	3
		4.0	7	4.0	7		

Table 28. Advising Hours, May through August (Friday Only)

May		June		July		August	
Hours Friday	% U.	Hours Friday	% U.	Hours Friday	% U.	Hours Friday	% U.
8.0	40	11.0	3	11.0	3	11.0	3
7.5	10	8.0	37	8.0	30	8.0	30
7.0	17	7.5	10	7.5	17	7.5	17
6.0	7	7.0	23	7.0	13	7.0	13
5.5	3	6.5	3	6.5	3	6.5	7
5.0	3	6.0	7	6.0	7	6.0	7
4.0	7	5.5	3	5.5	3	5.0	3
2.0	2	5.0	3	5.0	3	4.0	7
		4.0	7	4.0	7	2.0	3
		2.0	3	2.0	3		

Respondents were not asked to account for changes in hours. However, two advisors volunteered the information that their units reduced hours in May in order to accommodate preparation for graduation and other end-of-term administrative functions.

There may be other reasons as well for reduced hours during summer. A reduction in course offerings at this time of year means fewer students on campus; therefore, fewer students request advising, there may also be fewer advising staff on duty due to holiday time being taken.

Interestingly, one advising unit opened for four hours on Saturday during the month of June and one other unit opened for three hours on Saturday during July (Table 29). No explanation was provided for adding Saturday hours during the summer months.

Table 29. Advising Hours in June and July
(Saturday Only)

June		July	
Hours Saturday	% U.	Hours Saturday	% U.
4.0	3	4.0	3

Advisor Staffing

The study sought to determine the number of advising positions and job titles of those providing academic advice and whether they were doing so on a full-time or part-time basis. Based on questionnaire responses, it was determined that academic advisors can also be Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Lecturers, Instructors, Associate/Assistant Registrars, Professional Advisors and Student (Peer) Advisors.

The results in Table 30 shows that virtually all *full-time academic advisors* were Professional Advisors. Professional Advisors are those who performed academic advising and its related duties a minimum of 35 hours per week. Only one advising unit employed an academic (at the Professor level) as a full-time advisor. These results reconfirm the findings of previous research (Crocket, 1985; Gordon, 1992) that the responsibility for general academic advising has largely shifted from professors to professional advisors.

Table 30. Full-time Academic Advisors in Each Advising Unit

# Professional Advisors	# Associate Professors	% Universities
6		3
5		7
4		7
3		17
2	1	3
2		7
1		27
0		23

It was also revealed that nearly one-quarter of advising units do not employ anyone as an academic advisor on a full-time basis.

Table 31 summarizes a list of people who hold other positions at the university, and who also act as *part-time academic advisors*. Unlike full-time advisors who were almost entirely represented by one position (Professional Advisor), part-time advisors were drawn from a variety of positions within the university. More importantly, the

results confirm that advising units rely heavily on part-time advisors to meet the demand for advising from students.

Table 31. Part-time Academic Advisors in Each Advising Unit

% Inst.	Prof.	Asst. Prof.	Asst. Prof.	Lecturer	Instructor	Professional Advisor	Asst./Asst. Registrar	Student (Peer) Advisor
3	30	20	20			4	7	21
3			10			3		9
3	4		3	2				6
7	2	2				6		
7	1		1		1			5
10		1						
13		1						
17						2		
17						1		
19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

It should be noted that one questionnaire respondent reported an exceptionally high number of professors acting as part-time advisors. The respondent in this case may have defined the term "academic advisor" in the broadest sense and included all academics in the Faculty who could possibly be contacted by a student for academic advisement. By this definition all faculty members are potentially academic advisors which extends beyond the intent of identifying only advisors officially recognized as performing the function on a regular basis.

Student to Advisor Ratio

Table 32 indicates the number of Arts undergraduates that advising units were responsible for serving. Questionnaire respondents were not asked for a specific number of students that each advisor was responsible for advising. An accurate number would be difficult to determine as there are a number of variables affecting how many students an advisor might advise in a day, week or month. The level of complexity of students' inquiries, the cycle of the academic year and the fact that most advisors said they also advise by telephone, mail and email make it difficult for advisors to know the precise number of students they advise.

Table 32. Total Number of Undergraduate Students
(Full-time plus Part-time) Per Advising Unit

Number of Undergraduate Students per Advising Unit	# Universities	Valid % Universities
under 1,000	3	12
1,000 - 2,999	5	20
3,000 - 4,999	6	24
5,000 - 6,999	5	20
7,000 and over	6	24
Total	25	100
Valid Responses 25		Missing Responses 5

A few institutions were responsible for advising students by the hundreds. However, advising units at most institutions (88%) were responsible for advising students by the thousands, resulting in an extremely high student advisor ratio.

Interviewees claimed that high student-advisor ratios affects advisors' perceptions of the function they perform. All nine interviewees described the current level of advisor staffing as inadequate. At times, advisors found the volume of students that they advise to be overwhelming. One interviewee stated the job was "really exhausting" and compared the workload of advisors to that of personal counselors to emphasize her point:

You're not only dealing with academic issue, you're dealing with personal issues and those can be really draining on an individual...It's impossible to expect one person or a couple of people to absorb all of this all day long. The psychological counselors on campus...they don't deal with it all day. They work on other things and other projects throughout the day. Counselors are dealing with similar kinds of issues but on a personal level. They would not agree to seeing that many clients during the day, every fifteen minutes, and expect to be effective.

Supporting claims in the literature (Crocket, 1985), advisors confirmed that the heavy advising loads that they must assume forces them to minimize the time they spend with each student. Another interviewee commented that a high volume of students meant that they spend the vast majority of their time, if not all of their time, with students who are in crisis:

My experience has been that the majority of time available has been used to see students who are in academic difficulty. There is rarely time to initiate contact with the strong students to see how they are doing or if they are experiencing any difficulty.

Hence, those students who are managing on their own but who may benefit from advising are not brought into the process. Another respondent described this situation of under staffing of advisors as a barrier to student participation in the academic advising process. He stated that he believed many students are prevented from gaining access to the service entirely at his university or at best they have to wait an unreasonable amount

of time to meet with an advisor. It is not likely that every student seeks or wants advising during their degree but in the current climate of accountability, universities might want to be aware that all students may expect that it is available to them at any time.

Support Staff

Questionnaire respondents provided the information that all advising units employed *full-time* (Table 33) and/or *part-time* (Table 34) support staff. Support staff were identified on the questionnaire as secretarial, clerical and technical employees.

Table 33 shows that over half of advising units had either one or two full-time secretaries. Just under half of the advising units employed one to six full-time clerks.

Where respondents indicated several full-time clerks, it may be that these staff members also performed work for other areas such as admissions or records.

Table 33. Full-time Support Staff in Each Advising Unit

<u>% of Universities</u>	<u>Secretarial</u>	<u>Clerical</u>	<u>Technical</u>
3			1
7		6	
7		3	
7		2	2
20		1	
27	2		
37	1		

Table 34. Part-time Support Staff in Each Advising Unit

<u>% of Universities</u>	<u>Secretarial</u>	<u>Clerical</u>	<u>Technical</u>
3		6	
3		4	
3		3	
3	2	2	2
10	1		
17		1	

Advisors did not comment positively or negatively, on the questionnaire or in the interviews, on the adequacy of the level of support staff. It is not possible to draw conclusions from this because respondents were not specifically asked to comment on the matter.

Methods of Delivery

Four main methods of delivering academic advice to students emerged from the questionnaire responses: (1) advising students face to face on an individual basis; (2) advising in groups according to their year level of study; (3) advising in groups by type of student, for example, part-time, international or mature students; and (4) advising via means other than in person.

The results in Table 35 show that virtually all (97%) institutions provided academic advising to students on an individual basis, either by appointment with an advisor or on a drop-in basis. Only 3% reported that advising is available only by appointment. No institution reported a drop-in service as the only method of delivering academic advising.

Advising students in group sessions emerged as one means by which half of advising units are coping with the large volume of students. The predominant way of grouping students is by year of studies. Results show that 50% of institutions provide group sessions for first-year students, 10% offer group advising sessions for all year

levels combined and 3% of institutions provide separate group advising for second and third-year students.

A number of institutions also indicated that they provide group advising sessions for particular categories of students. Almost one-quarter (23%) offer sessions for part-time students. At 17% of institutions, international students and mature students can attend sessions focused on advising to address their concerns. Only one university provides group advising sessions for First Nations students, and another provides sessions for students with disabilities. One unit provides sessions for students in specific disciplines.

Table 35. Methods of Delivering Academic Advice

Method of Delivering Academic Advice	# Universities	% Universities
Individual Basis, Appointment and Drop-in	29	97
Individual Basis, Appointment Only	1	3
Individual Basis, Drop-in Only	0	0
Group Sessions for First-Year	15	50
Group Sessions, All Years Combined	3	10
Group Sessions for Second-Year	1	3
Group Sessions for Third-Year	1	3
Group Sessions for Part-time Students	7	23
Group Sessions for International Students	5	17
Group Session for Mature Students	5	17
Group Session for First Nations Students	1	3
Group Sessions for Disabled Students	1	3
Group Sessions for Specific Disciplines	1	3
Telephone	25	83
Mail	24	80
Internet/email	18	60
Computer Print-out of Degree Progress	18	60

Most institutions also provide academic advice to students by means other than having them visit an advising office. The majority of Arts advising units provide advising over the telephone (83%), by mail (80%), by email (60%) and by offering students a computer print-out of their progress toward degree completion (60%).

Student Involvement

Astin's (1993) theory stresses that the undergraduate experience is directly related to the quality and amount of student involvement in the university environment. Likewise, the more students are encouraged to feel responsible for their programs, the earlier they will recognize the "fit" (Tinto, 1975, 1987) between themselves and the university they have chosen. One interviewee explained that for some students, communicating with their advisor can be the first step toward establishing a support network with their university and a commitment to completing their degree. However, as Table 36 indicates, when asked if students were "actively involved" in advising sessions, nearly equal percentages of questionnaire respondents answered "yes" (54%) and "no" (46%). The questionnaire provided the example of "actively involved" as students bringing a course plan for their degree to the advising and being prepared for an exchange of information with their advisor.

Table 36. Students Actively Involved in Advising Sessions

Students Actively Involved in Advising Sessions?	# Institutions	% Institutions
Yes	14	54
No	12	46
Total	26	100
Valid Responses 26		Missing Responses 4

If questionnaire respondents confirmed that students were actively involved in advising sessions, they were asked to describe the type of involvement. A substantial percentage (86%) indicated that students arrived at advising sessions with a program plan and are expected to be prepared to exchange information with their advisor. The remaining advisors who indicated student involvement in advising sessions did not say what form it took.

Advisors' Perceptions on Academic Advising

Advisors who completed the questionnaire were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with six statements on the relationship between academic advising and undergraduate retention. The six statements addressed different aspects of how academic advisors perceive the relationship.

Table 37 shows that nearly all (92%) advisors agreed or strongly agreed with four statements: (1) that academic advising improves students' persistence to degree completion; (2) academic advising improves institutions' retention rates; (3) academic

advising supports the needs and objectives of students; and (4) academic advising supports the needs and objectives of the university. Eight percent of respondents did not express an opinion.

Table 37. Advisors Perceptions on Academic Advising

Statement:	Extent of Agreement				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	% Resp.	% Resp.	% Resp.	% Resp.	% Resp.
Academic advising improves students' persistence to degree completion.	0	0	8	35	57
Academic advising improves institutions' retention rates.	0	0	8	32	60
Academic advising supports the needs and objectives of students.	0	0	8	30	62
Academic advising supports the needs and objectives of the university.	0	0	8	41	51
Administration recognizes academic advising as an important service to students.	3	11	24	49	14
Administration recognizes academic advising as an important service to the university.	3	16	32	35	14

Somewhat fewer advisors agreed or strongly agreed with the two statements concerning administration. Table 37 shows that 63% of advisors agreed or strongly agreed that administration recognizes that academic advising is an important service to students. Half (49%) of advisors agreed or strongly agreed that administration recognizes it is an important service to the university.

The main concern expressed by interviewees was the perception of a lack of recognition from administration that academic advising plays a role in advancing

students goals and institutional goals. The following comments are specific examples of this sentiment:

I think (advising) could be improved by a closer relationship with administration, and a recognition of the value of our function.

It is recognized within the Dean's Office...that advising is definitely worthwhile. I am not that confident that the university administration believes it to be important.

I feel that institutions as a whole do not recognize the role that academic advisors can play in student retention and completion, and don't capitalize on our services or skills as professionals.

The link between retention and advising is almost ignored despite the many studies showing its effectiveness.

Some interviewees shared the opinion that economics is the true driving force behind administration's support for academic advising:

We see the need now of providing services for students and everyone is tying it to retention because of course things are being driven by the financial situation the university is under. It's one thing to be driven by that situation. I'd rather of thought we were doing this because we believe how important it is to students.

[Advising] is certainly seen as part of the [program] for every student that will be studying here. In terms of tuition and provincial subsidy, it's a significant amount of money.

One advisor presented a more optimistic view, "This university has just begun a serious drive for recruitment and retention. I believe the disparate perceptions of advisers and central administration will eventually converge."

Improving the academic advisor and faculty relationship through more communication with faculty members was suggested as an indirect method of improving administration's recognition of the importance of academic advising to the university.

The rationale behind this idea was that some faculty members who have performed academic advising will eventually become senior administrators.

Advisors' skepticism of administration's commitment to advising seems to have had little effect on their enthusiasm for the job. Ardent comments from interviewees provided important insight into how advisors perceive the importance and value of the job they perform. The following comments represent a range of comments provided by interviewees:

I think academic advising is fundamental to helping students develop their goals and objectives....Advisors are not only there to review policies and procedures that are required for the faculty, but to help students in becoming better students....The mission, goal of the university is to foster education and give students the opportunity to go forth with what knowledge they've learned and become viable producing citizens of their society...academic advising supports that goal by helping students understand what it is they are required to do for the program they are in...advisors help students through the process.

Academic advising is a very important, very essential service....Students are increasingly experiencing external stresses, financial, stress, academic stress, family stress. It's really important they have somewhere they can turn to for direction.

We approach it from a retention perspective. In order to allow students the opportunity to succeed academically we feel that knowing all their options, knowing all the different policies and regulations and how they relate to decisions they are going to have to make in the future helps them not to have to be worried about that side of the game and be focusing on their courses....We've seen students who get bogged down, unfortunately so, in areas like a policy they don't understand and how it relates to them. We come in and assist on that level. We also open up horizons for students...making university more successful overall...there's this opening of another door for them

This same advisor pointed out that even the simplest advising tasks, such as confirming to a student that they are on the "right track" can be important to the student. It gives them confidence that they have planned well and enables them to focus on their

studies by relieving the anxiety associated with wondering if they accommodated all requirements and followed all procedures. The literature (Andres, Andruske & Hawkey , 1996; Pascarella, 1985; Tinto, 1987) confirms that students need this type of reassurance as their goals are affected and may change according to their experiences throughout their undergraduate program. A questionnaire respondent relished his job as an advisor because it puts him a position to allow "the university to show its human side rather than just the paper and rules side."

The claims in the literature that positively link supportive student services and retention, were reinforced by another interviewee. She pointed out that for some students, establishing a relationship with their advisor is the first step toward creating a relationship with their university and a commitment toward completing their degree. This advisor stated that the advisor-student relationship is often the foundation of the support network needed for persistence. This same point was emphasized by another advisor who stated that the majority of students in his faculty arrived not knowing what they want to achieve academically or career wise. For these students, he believed that quality advising was "essential, crucial" to retention.

Other interviewees described the importance of advising as assisting students in successfully making the transition from high school community to university community. Their ideas are very similar to Tinto's (1975, 1987) theory on retention but with an added element. These advisors also included as their responsibility, the task of preparing students for the transition out of university upon successful completion of a degree. Interviewees provided specific examples of what they meant:

Advising is a matter of bridging the gap between what they are like as they come out of high school and ultimately what they wish to end up with in terms of a completed degree and some sort of career potential....In building graduates you've got to do the very best you can to change that student from a high school graduate into a university graduate and hopefully a successful person in their career and other aspects of their lives.

Now the goal is to look at not just academic advising, but the career counseling and personal counseling areas as well. How can we ease the transition through....Suddenly academic advising is assigning itself an expanded horizon which is not just making sure they get their program but also encouraging students to get into cooperative education, getting part-time jobs, full-time jobs while they continue their education and opening up that door for them. Hopefully, eventually playing a very big role in opening the door as they leave and helping them with the employment transition.

In building graduates you've got to do the very best you can to change that student from a high school graduate into a university graduate and hopefully a successful person in their career and other aspects of their lives.

Only one interviewee stated he believed academic advising had no impact on retention and that students would remain in school whether they obtained advising or not. In his opinion, student services including advising were incidental, it is the subjects taught and the professors teaching them that mattered. Previous research (Pascarella, 1980; Astin, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) has confirmed that faculty members as role models influence student persistence. However, some of the same researchers and others (Forrest, 1985; Braxton, Duster & Pascarella, 1988; Metzner, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), have found that high quality advising programs positively affects persistence by an indirect effect on grades and student satisfaction and negatively affects withdrawal. Hartley (1983) and Metzner (1989) also found through their research that poor advising contributes to attrition and the highest withdrawal rates are among students

who received no advising (Hartley, 1983; Metzner, 1989). The majority of advisors expressed opinions that concur with the literature that academic advising has a positive impact on student retention and that it could be even more influential through a "joint strategy" with other student services for achieving short term and long term academic and career goals.

Most Important Issues to Advisors

Lastly, in an open-ended question, questionnaire respondents were asked to identify what they considered to be the three most important issues that Arts academic advisors faced in performing their job. A list of 28 issues of concern was compiled from their responses. The issues were then grouped into three categories: (1) workload and resources; (2) students' needs; and (3) communication (see Table 38).

The issue mentioned most frequently was workload and resources. Half of the questionnaire respondents were troubled over the ever-increasing volume and complexity of knowledge required to perform their job effectively. One-third of respondents mentioned that heavy advising loads in conjunction with under staffing of academic advisors as a serious issue.

Seven of nine interviewees reiterated the concerns of questionnaire respondents. Typical comments were: "There needs to be more resources devoted to it... To be more proactive requires more resources. We just don't have the staff," and "We have an enormous number of [programs] and students that we're responsible for". One

interviewee injected some cynical humour, “We are driven to some extent by staff restrictions... The worst thing that could happen would be if we lost a position. I’d be out knitting a noose!”

Advisors presented some ideas for coping with the situation. Group advising sessions were identified by questionnaire respondents and interviewees as one way of managing the volume of students they were responsible for serving. Some universities had extended their hours of operation to be open during the early evenings. The extended hours were covered by having advisors work in shifts. There was also a consensus of opinion among the nine interviewees that students benefited most when advising was done by a combination of faculty advisors and professional advisors and that this should continue. They described professional advisors as bringing procedural knowledge and consistency to the process of advising due to their expertise across the “components of advising” while faculty members possess the in-depth knowledge of courses and disciplines.

The second most mentioned issue of concern to questionnaire respondents was students’ needs. Balancing students’ needs and university needs was at times a difficult thing for advisors to achieve. Dealing with students compassionately and respectfully in a bureaucratic environment summoned all of advisors’ expertise in the hope of improving the undergraduate experience. Helping students manage the present reality of day to day survival in the university community and simultaneously plan for an unknown future economy also presented unique challenges for Arts advisors.

Table 38. Most Important Issues to Advisors

Most Important Issues to Advisors	# Resp.	% Resp.
<u>Workload and Resources:</u>		
Amount of knowledge required to advise accurately and effectively	18	49
Workload	12	32
Lack of institutional support	9	24
Impact of technology	6	16
Cutbacks	4	11
Maintaining level of service	2	5
Improving productivity	1	3
Continued existence	1	3
Increasing number of students with personal and financial problems	1	3
Increasing expectations of students	1	3
Problem-solving skills	1	3
Repetition	1	3
Divorcing one's self from students' problems	1	3
Level of advising (university versus remedial)	1	3
Understanding the transfer environment	1	3
<u>Students' Needs:</u>		
Student needs versus university needs	7	19
Student attrition	3	8
Compassion/sympathy for students	2	5
Improving the undergraduate experience	2	5
Economic pressures on students	2	5
Employment future for students	2	5
Student apathy	1	3
Minimizing the effect of bureaucracy on students	1	3
<u>Communication:</u>		
Internal communication	5	14
Participation in the academic decision-making process	1	3
Need to be proactive	1	3
Accountability	1	3
Cultural communication	1	3

Communication was also an important issue to several questionnaire respondents, especially communication among advisors, faculty members and other student service personnel. At least one interviewee echoed the same concern and said that in an attempt to remedy the situation that she had set up a speakers series at her university. Each talk was presented by someone from a different student service office. She claimed the series has reinforced the common goal of working to assist students. She also saw it as contributing to the professional development of advisors because their “ability to work for the betterment of students” had been improved.

Comparison Between Type of Universities

The data collected from universities where Arts undergraduate programs were intended to lead to further studies and from universities where earning the degree is the primary goal provided a basis of comparison for advisors’ responsibilities and advising practice. No significant differences were found between the two types of universities.

Advisors’ specific responsibilities, duties and the extent of their authority were tested. A statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 .09$, $p < .10$) between the two groups of universities indicated differences in the percentage of advisors determining graduation requirements (41% of advisors performed the function at the first type of university and 24% at the second type) and explaining non-academic policies (20% of advisors and 33.3% of advisors performed the function at respective universities).

Also a significant chi-square at the .10 level indicated a difference in the percentage of advisors performing this function at universities with undergraduate programs geared to further studies and advisors at universities that focus on the BA as the terminal degree. A similar significant difference was found between the two types of universities with regard to the percentage of advisors determining if students were eligible to graduate.

Although not statically significant, from a substantively significant perspective 33% of advisors at universities that emphasized pursuing further studies were more likely to have this responsibility for assisting in resolving student-instructor conflicts than 17% of advisors at the other universities. This may mean that higher authorities at the other universities handle these matters.

There were no statistically significant differences in advising units hours of operation or in their methods of delivering academic advice between the types of universities. However, a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2 .05, p < .10$) between the two groups of universities indicated differences the area of student involvement in advising sessions. At universities geared to preparing students for further studies, 39% of students were actively involved in advising sessions compared to 15% of advisors at universities where the focus is on students obtaining the undergraduate degree.

Summary

In reporting a broad range of responsibilities and extensive decision making authority, advisors recognized that they have the potential to influence students' academic plans and their undergraduate experience. Primary duties were focused on program planning and associated duties with students, explaining policies and procedures to students, faculty members, staff and the public, performing outreach activities to initiate contact with potential students and maintain contact with current students, and liaison work involving with the broader university community and the public.

According to respondents from all universities, students received assistance in five main areas of program planning: course selection; specialization selection; understanding degree requirements; course scheduling; and discovering special learning opportunities. Over half of advisors were involved with explaining non-academic policies to students and half reported that they were performing some form of mediation in resolving student-instructor conflict. Most advisors also had extensive authority to make discretionary decisions, especially in the application of rules and regulations. Many were also making these types of decisions with regards to students' academic standing, and admission and transfer credit appeals.

Outreach activities were identified by respondents as important for two reasons: (1) contacting students assisted them with the transition into university and maintaining that contact continued to help students progress through their undergraduate experience, and (2) continued contact enabled advisors to assist students with the transition out of

their undergraduate program. Some advising units indicated they were initiating programs with other student services in the areas of career and personal planning to improve the advising process. Other units were working on improving the use of information technology to update the communication process with students. However, some advisors described that their initiatives in these directions were frustrated by a lack of financial and human resources and perceived this situation to be a result of administration's lack of recognition of the importance of the service.

There was considerable consistency in Arts academic advising practice across Canada with regards to hours of operation for advising units, advisors staffing and methods of delivering academic advice. The majority of respondents reported that students could access advising services from September to April, 7 or 8 hours per day, a few were open more hours each day and some were open less. Minimal differences were reported for May through August.

Results showed that virtually all full-time advisors are professional advisors and that part-time advisors represented a variety of other positions at the university. General academic advising has shifted from professors to professional advisors and advising units rely heavily on part-time advisors to meet the demand for advising from students. That demand appeared to be high since results confirmed most advising units are responsible for advising students by the thousands. Advisors expressed concern over the effect their workload had on their ability to provide quality service and also the affect on their own well-being. A few advisors described the situation as a barrier to some students gaining access to the service. At less than half of universities, students are actively engaged in

advising sessions with their advisors. This may be a result of time restrictions limiting the amount of interaction between advisor and student.

Arts advising units across the country deliver advice primarily through four main methods: (1) face to face on an individual basis; (2) in groups according to year level; (3) in groups by type of student; and (4) by electronic, written or telephone communication.

The vast majority of advisors supported the following four statements: (1) academic advising improves students' persistence to degree completion; (2) academic advising improves university retention rates; (3) academic advising supports the needs and objectives of students; and (4) academic advising supports the needs and objectives of the university. Advisors' main concerns were over the perception of a lack of recognition from central administration of advising's contribution to advancing the goals of students and university. Despite this perceived lack of recognition, advisors were convinced of the importance of their role in improving the undergraduate experience.

The most important issues to advisors were grouped into three closely related categories: (1) workload and resources; (2) students needs; and (3) communication. Steps were being taken or planned by many advising units to better meet the demand for advising through group sessions, improved technology and initiatives with other student services.

CHAPTER 6

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has provides the first national profile of academic advising practice for Arts students at English-speaking public universities in Canada from the perspective of those doing the advising. Respondents to the survey questionnaire and interviewees contributed a wealth of detailed information about their advising units and about themselves that has enabled policy and practice to be determined within the context of current literature on undergraduate retention.

Summary of the Findings

Information was accumulated in four areas:

1. Arts academic advising, its organizational fit, and those who do advising. Findings of this study indicate that academic advising practice is not guided by formal policy that links the service to university, Faculty and students' goals. Instead, the service has evolved within the context of universities having to be more accountable in general for the education and support services they provide. Advising practice is changing in response to the expectations and demands of students that their undergraduate experience

facilitates the achievement of academic goals in association with career and other personal goals.

Despite the lack of a guiding policy on academic advising, there is a considerable amount of consistency in current practice across the country with regard to where Arts academic advising fits into the university organization, how the function is being provided to students, and in the duties and responsibilities of advisors. In earlier times academic advising at universities was performed only by professors. Hence, advising has its roots in the Faculty and has continued as a Faculty duty.

Most advising units in this study report to a higher academic authority such as a Department Chair, Associate Dean, Dean or Vice-President Academic, with a Dean being the most frequently mentioned as responsible for advising units. Most academic advising is done by professional advisors in Faculty Advising Offices or by individual faculty members in department. As primarily a Faculty responsibility the service is funded at most universities by the Faculty of Arts budget.

Most Faculties staff their advising units with both full-time and part-time academic advisors. The majority of full-time academic advisors were found to be professional advisors who do not concurrently hold another position at the university. Whereas full-time professional advisors are dedicated to academic advising units, many part-time advisors had other jobs at the university which may be their primary responsibility. Many part-time advisors are faculty members and some have other staff positions.

Advisors are well educated. While all hold at least one university degree, the majority hold a Masters or Doctorate degree. Almost all individuals involved in the advising endeavor have an academic background in humanities, social science or in a profession such as law, social work or education. They are also experienced at working in the university environment and as academic advisors. Many have held several other positions within the university environment. Nearly all advisors held a job related to academic advising before obtaining a position as an academic advisors. Based on responses from questionnaire respondents, the national average for full-time and part-time advisors is 11 years of experience on the job.

Advisors are also active participants in the university community beyond their advising unit. The majority indicated that they are members of at least one university or faculty committee, and many are active on several committees.

For the most part, Arts academic advisors did not receive formal training for the job. Many advisors mentioned initial training is needed and that they believed professional development in the areas of student development, retention and policy administration would also be advantageous. In the same vein, while nearly half of advisors undergo performance evaluation on an annual basis to assess their academic knowledge, management skills and personal development, over half of advisors do not have their performance evaluated.

2. Arts academic advisors' responsibilities. Advisors' responsibilities require they interact with many areas and levels of the university community and the public. Their

duties range from activities with students (*e.g.*, program planning, explaining academic and non-academic policies and procedures, reviewing students' records for promotion and graduation, and providing assistance in resolving student-instructor conflict) to explaining policies and procedures to faculty members, other university staff and the public to promoting the BA program at liaison functions inside and outside the university.

Advisors are also responsible for initiating contact with potential students and new students, and for maintaining contact with continuing students. These outreach efforts serve different purposes. Keeping students informed of program requirements is one goal. However, many advisors state that their main objective is to ensure that students are aware that academic advising is also a support service that assists new students with the transition into university. Also, it provides continuing students with guidance throughout their program and helps to prepare them for the transition out of university upon completing their degree.

As part of their responsibilities, advisors hold the authority to exercise discretion in making decisions regarding the interpretation and implementation of policies and procedures. Most advisors have authority in the interpretation and application of academic rules and regulations. However, at many universities advisors are also authorized to exercise discretion in the areas of admissions, academic standing and transfer credit.

3. Current academic advising practice. There is considerable consistency in Arts academic advising practice across Canada with regard to hours of operation for advising units, advisor staffing and methods of delivering academic advice. The number of hours that students may obtain face to face advising from September through April remains constant during this eight month period. Most advising units are open seven hours or longer each day. From May through August there is a slight reduction in hours by most units to accommodate administrative functions such as adjudication of grades and graduation, to accommodate for fewer students on campus requesting advising, and to allow for staff holidays.

Whereas virtually all full-time advisors are professional advisors, part-time advisors are drawn from a variety of other positions at the university. The responsibility for general academic advising has shifted largely from professors to professional advisors and advising units rely heavily on part-time advisors to meet the demand for advising from students. That demand appears to be high since results confirm most advising units are responsible for advising students by the thousands. Advisors expressed concern over the effect their workload has on their ability to provide quality service and also on their own well-being. A few advisors describe the situation as a barrier to some students gaining access to the service.

There are four main methods being used to deliver academic advice: (1) advising students on an individual basis; (2) advising students in groups according their year level of study; (3) advising students by type of student, for example, part-time, international or

mature students; and (4) advising via means other than in person such as by telephone, mail, email and computerized degree audit systems.

Advisors at many universities describe students as being actively involved in advising sessions by arriving with a program plan and being prepared to discuss and exchange ideas with their advisor. However, a similar number of advisors claim that students are not involved to this extent in advising sessions.

4. Arts academic advisors' perceptions on the role of academic advising. The majority of advisors state that they believe that academic advising improves students' persistence to degree completion and that it also improves institutional retention rates. Similarly, they describe advising as supporting both the needs and objectives of students and the university. At the same time, some advisors perceive that the central administration at their university does not recognize that advising is important to students and the university. As a result, these advisors said the service did not receive adequate financial or human resources. They also expressed concern about meeting the increasingly diverse needs of students within the context of heavy advising loads, complex policy and program regulations, frozen or shrinking resources, and at times inadequate internal communication.

Despite the perception of a lack of recognition from administration, many advisors mentioned that their advising unit had plans to or were already expanding their advising service through a joint strategy with other student services. The intent of such initiatives is to link short-term and long-term academic and career planning for students.

Conclusion

Arts academic advising appears to have evolved as part of a trend that began just after the Second World War when universities became more responsive to the needs of the greater society by embracing a more diverse student population, increasing program and research areas, offering part-time and distance education and introducing information technology into the learning environment. As the university environment became more complex the need for services to assist students in making the most of their experience has increased. Academic advising for Arts students is one of these services.

This study has determined current practices in academic advising for Bachelor of Arts students across Canada and it has explored advisors' perceptions on the impact of advising on student development and retention. Conclusions are based on the responses received on the questionnaire and through personal interviews.

Advising for BA students operates within the Faculty of Arts at most universities. The intent of the service is to meet both students' and Faculty goals. By assisting students in developing their programs to meet their own needs, academic advising also improves persistence through to completion of the degree. For this reason, many advisors believe that academic advising also supports the objectives of their university. As such, it may be useful to introduce advisors to their university's mandate and goals as soon as they obtain their advising position.

Arts advisors are well educated and most have extensive experience in academic advising and possess work experience in other areas of the university. Their academic and professional backgrounds could be complemented with initial training and professional development. This is important as many advisors are involved in training other staff, making it likely that advisors contribute to maintaining continuity in knowledge and practice within their advising unit.

Most Arts advisors are also involved in university committee work, indicating that many may bring current knowledge of other areas of the university to advising. These contacts with other areas may place advisors in a position to cultivate joint strategies for improving the undergraduate experience.

Reaching out to students, as well as to the rest of the university and the community beyond is a component of Arts advising practice. This means that the majority of academic advisors are involved in attracting new students to the BA program, in initiating and maintaining contact with current students, and in maintaining the public profile of the degree.

Although the number of hours that students can gain access to Arts academic advising at each university remains fairly constant throughout the year, there is considerable difference in hours of operation among universities. More details on the circumstances at each university need to be known before conclusions can be drawn. However, the number of advisors on staff may be a contributing factor to the number of hours advising units are open, and the number of staff may be contingent on the amount of available resources. Both of which advisors have identified as being in short supply.

Academic advice for Arts student is being delivered in a variety of ways at all universities. It continues to adapt in effort to make advising accessible to students in ways that are more convenient to serve their needs. Advising units that indicated students were not actively involved in advising session may find that making printed and electronic information about the BA easier to understand and easily accessible in advance would encourage students to become more proactive with their own programs.

From many advisors' perspectives, academic advising is one facet that contributes to student success but that the contribution can be improved through partnerships with other student services, such as career planning work cooperative programs, and other learning opportunities, such as studying abroad. This approach to advising broadens the function to include more than planning of courses to meet degree requirements. Even though this task is still central to the advising purpose, advisors' responsibilities now include assisting students in connecting their learning experience to their goals beyond the BA degree.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study several recommendations can be made for the development of academic advising policy and programs for Arts students, and for the advancement of knowledge on undergraduate retention. The purpose of these

recommendations is to improve current practice and develop a more effective service for students and the university.

Policy Formulation

Senior administrators might consider taking a more active role in setting policy and providing direction for academic advising services. Advisors are accountable to many people but ironically, results of the study confirm that few advisors are introduced to their university's mission and mandate and it is uncommon for advising units to have their own mission statement. This suggests that communication up and down the hierarchy could be improved. This could be accomplished by administrators communicating universities goals to advising staff and encouraging them to develop an associated mission statement for their unit based on the broader university statement. The advising statement could appear on all literature produced by the unit so that students, staff and faculty understand its objectives and how they serve to unite the goals of students, Faculty of Arts and the university.

As the literature on retention emphasizes, the best undergraduate experience is attained when student and university work in partnership toward the same goals. The match begins with clear and consistent university objectives are communicated to students, enabling them to match their goals with that of their university. It is then likely that students will understand, accept and identify with those objectives early in their

programs, and enable them to realize there is a connection between their personal objectives and those of the university.

Policy could include a commitment of an appropriate level of financial and human resources to ensure that high quality advising programs are offered. It is not being argued that academic advising holds the same rank as research and teaching. However, the Faculties are equally accountable for providing a quality experience for students in all aspects of the learning environment..

The under-staffing of academic advisors was identified as problematic across the country and specifically as a barrier to accessing the service. Previous research has shown that being able to gain access to support services fosters persistence and retention. The decision on the appropriate number of advisors for each advising unit should be made on an individual basis each Faculty of Arts..

Advising Program/Service Development

Regardless of the mandate of each university, the student body includes those who will pursue further studies after their undergraduate degree and those who will pursue other personal goals. Advising programs and services could be developed that serve the unique needs of each advising unit and university.

To begin with, academic advisors, be they faculty members or professional advisors, should be carefully selected and properly trained. At the time of this study advisors identified that they received minimal if any, initial training. It is

recommended that initial training be introduced for all new advisors along with regular performance evaluation to ensure that high standards of service are maintained. There are several reasons that warrant having well-trained academic advisors on staff. In all Faculties of Arts the advising function is complex and operates on multiple levels. Their duties have both scope and depth in responsibility and authority in dealing with university and Faculty of Arts policy and procedure. Advisors are accountable to and interact with students, faculty members, administrators, staff and the public. They are required to work independently and as a part of a team and their interpersonal and communication skills are called upon to effectively with others on an individual basis and to large groups.

In order to provide and maintain a quality service, it is equally important that advisors receive performance evaluation on a regular basis and on-going professional development to maintain current knowledge on student development and retention theories and policy administration. The current reporting and funding structures, and the types of units responsible for the academic advising of Arts students ensures that the service will remain under the auspices of the Faculty. Therefore, it would be appropriate for Faculties of Arts to assume responsibility for the professional development of academic advisors.

Many Faculties of Arts have embraced professional advisors within their advising units. Although professors remain advisors for their particular disciplines, much of the responsibility for more general advising of students has shifted to professional advisors.

This may be because advisors are making efforts to expand the definition of their role to include assisting students in preparing for whatever lies beyond the BA.

The decision to use professional advisors or faculty members as advisors, or a combination of both, will be influenced by university and faculty policy on advising. Both types of advisors bring unique qualities to the job. Professional advisors have made academic advising a career choice and questionnaire and interview responses indicate a high level of commitment to their choice. Professional advisors have acquired a broad spectrum of knowledge on policy and programs by being immersed in interpreting and applying rules policy, rules and regulations on a daily basis. Interviewees, including faculty members, expressed the opinion that professional advisors are able to apply policy and procedure on a more consistent basis due to their extensive experience working with it. However, faculty members are able to contribute in depth knowledge of their discipline, courses and often related career opportunities. Although faculty members tend to be available for academic advising on a part-time basis only, they have a central role in the academic advising process. It is recommended that universities continue to use both faculty members as advisors and professional advisors for the unique qualities each bring to an advising service.

The use of part-time advisors, regardless of whether they are faculty members or professional advisors, has positive and negative effects. Employing part-time advisors means a larger pool of advisors among which advisees can be distributed. This in turn can prevent the same few advisors from having to do all the advising and reduce "burn out". On the other hand, the more people included in advising, the more spread out they

may be around the faculty or university and the harder it may become to monitor that consistent advising is taking place. As with the level of staffing, the merits of professional or faculty members as advisors, and full-time versus part-time advisors will have to be determined by each university according to its own circumstances and requirements.

Results showed that at many universities, Arts students are not actively involved in advising sessions. Advising units at these universities may want to consider how advising sessions can become more student oriented through encouraging them to feel responsible for and in control of their own degree programs at all times. Transferring this sense of control and responsibility will take a concerted effort in several directions.

Although it is beyond the authority of academic advisors to actually change policy or regulations, it is possible for them to suggest revisions that may improve students' interaction with the bureaucracy. Regulations may have become unnecessarily complex due to policy and programs being repeatedly revised over the years, as a consequence, the original intent has been lost. Suggesting clarification on issues is within advisors' responsibilities and may facilitate the creation of a set of rules that students will be able to work with independently. A more immediate solution may be a handbook for students that walks them through the process of planning their program and includes step-by-step tips on how to proceed through some of the more common problems that students encounter, and tips on when, where and how to obtain assistance.

Information technology could be used more effectively so that designing a degree program can be done by students on their own. This does not mean the guidance and

advice that advisors provide can be replaced by technology, it simply shifts the process of discovering and exploring program possibilities to the student.

In the process of planning and discovering the future, students may need the assistance of other services in partnership with academic advising. Andres, Andruske and Hawkey (1996) found that many students are bewildered and overwhelmed by the complexity of the university community and do not know where to go for help. Closer ties with other students services, such as personal counseling and career planning, as well as those that coordinate other learning experiences, may assist in connecting students to the appropriate service more quickly. On a broader scale, any student whether they are seeking assistance in pursuing advanced studies, a professional programs or expecting to move immediately into the work world may benefit from a coordinated planning effort.

Theory

This study advances current knowledge of academic advising's role in improving the quality of undergraduate student life. In the context of previous literature, this study begins to recognize that academic advising is one thread that weaves Astin's theory on involvement, Tinto's theory on integration, and Baxter Magolda, Chickering and Reisser, and Perry's theories on student development into one reality. Students' success may be defined by their experiences with all the people, policies and practices they encounter within the university. Advising has become one of the support services that assists students in managing their experience. It is recommended that the research into higher

education continue to explore academic advising's role in influencing the quality of that experience.

Further Research

This national study presents the academic advisor's perspective on advising. However, to date detailed studies from students' perspective does not exist. Student input is critical in developing meaningful advising policy and practice. A cross-country study from their perspective could determine regional differences in student's needs, yielding valuable information for university and government planners. Individual studies by each university or even by Faculty from students' perspectives would also benefit those using and providing the service.

A comparative study of faculty advising offices with central advising offices could be undertaken to determine which organizational structure best serves both students and university needs. Some universities currently provide general advising through a central office. The merits of this type of organizational arrangement warrant closer examination.

Other researchers (Astin, 1993; Billson & Brooks Terry, 1987; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Forrest, 1985; Tinto, 1987) have concluded that the earlier students receive assistance in integrating into the university environment the more likely they are to complete their degree. It would be expected that at those institutions where students

are not contacted by advisors until they are entering third-year and ready to declare a specialization, a number of students have already left the university, either voluntarily or involuntarily because they did not receive support or guidance at critical points in the integrating process. Further research could investigate academic advising's role in this important issue.

Most importantly, a Canadian longitudinal study should be conducted to determine the effects of academic advising on students who participate in the process compared to students who do not receive any advising. A definitive study should include all faculties. Measuring the successful completion rate of students who have used academic advising as a support service compared to those who have not may assess its true value to students and universities.

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Appendix A
Mail Questionnaire

SECTION A	Organizational Fit. This section is to determine where the academic advising function fits into the organizational structure of your university.
----------------------	---

1. (a) Which of the following units have responsibility for academic advising at your institution? *(please check as many as applicable):*

- ☐ Central Advising Office
☐ Individual Faculties/Schools
☐ Individual Department Faculty Members
☐ Other (please specify) _____

- (b) If more than one unit is responsible, what percentage of all advising would you estimate is done by each unit?

	% All Advising
Central Advising Office	
Individual Faculties/Schools	
Individual Department Members	
Other <i>(please specify)</i> _____	_____
_____	_____
	100%

2. To which type of advising unit do you belong?

3. (a) Is the university's mission statement and mandate explained to new members of your advising unit. *(check one):*

- ☐ All positions ☐ No one ☐ Some positions

- (b) If "Some positions," please state which positions.

4. Does your advising unit have its own mission statement which is explained to all new members?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Please provide an organization chart indicating key reporting relationships that show how your advising unit fits into your university's structure.

SECTION B	Staffing. This section is to determine how advising services are being staffed.
----------------------	--

1. For your unit, please indicate the number of advisors in each category performing academic advising on a full-time and/or part-time basis.

	Full-time (35 Hrs/Wk)	Part-time (less than 35 Hrs/wk)
Professor		
Associate Professor		
Assistant Professor		
Instructors		
Lecturers		
Professional Advisors		
Peer (Student) Advisors		
Other _____		
Total Number of Advisors in your unit.		

2. For your unit, please indicate the number of support staff in each category.

	Full-time (35 Hrs/Wk or more)	Part-time (less than 35 Hrs/wk)
Secretarial		
Clerical		
Technical		
Other _____		
Total Number of Support Staff in your unit.		

SECTION C	Funding. This section is to determine how academic advising services are being funded.
----------------------	---

1. What is your advising unit's primary source of funding?

- ☐ Student Services/Student Affairs Budget
- ☐ Individual Faculty/School Budget
- ☐ Individual Department Budget
- ☐ Receives No Funding
- ☐ Other (*please indicate source*) _____

2. (a) Are students charged fees for any of your services?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes → Please list:

<u>Service</u>	<u>Fee</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**SECTION
D****Service.** This section is to determine when academic advising is available to students.

1. Please indicate the number of hours each day that your advising unit is open for each of the months listed below.

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Jan.							
Feb.							
Mar.							
Apr.							
May							
June							
July							
Aug.							
Sept.							
Oct.							
Nov.							
Dec.							

SECTION E	Perceptions. This section is to determine academic advisors' perceptions about the impact of advising on undergraduate retention.
----------------------	--

1. For the following, please circle the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements about academic advising and retention.

Extent of Agreement:				
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| a. Advising improves students' persistence to degree completion. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| b. Advising improves institutions' retention rates. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| c. Advising supports the needs and objectives of students. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| d. Advising supports the needs and objectives of the university. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| f. Administration recognizes academic advising as an important service to students. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |
| g. Administration recognizes academic advising as an important service to the university. | <i>SD</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>SA</i> |

Additional Comments:

SECTION F	Practice. This section is to determine academic advising delivery methods.
----------------------	---

1. For your unit, please indicate all the ways students may access advising (*check all that apply*):

- ☐ individually, by appointment only
- ☐ individually, on a drop-in basis only
- ☐ individually, appointment and drop-in

- ☐ group sessions for all years combined
- ☐ separate group session, for year 4
- ☐ separate group session, for year 3
- ☐ separate group session, for year 2
- ☐ separate group session, for year 1

- ☐ group session for part-time students
- ☐ group session for mature students
- ☐ group sessions for gifted students
- ☐ group session for disabled students
- ☐ group sessions for international students
- ☐ other _____

2. Which other delivery methods are used to advise students? (*Check all that apply*):

- ☐ computerized print outs of degree progress
- ☐ internet / email
- ☐ intervention on an individual basis for students at risk
- ☐ telephone
- ☐ mail
- ☐ other _____

3. Are students actively involved in advising sessions? (*For example, students may be required to bring a program plan they have developed themselves in advance of meeting with an advisor.*)

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes → Please describe how: _____
- _____
- _____

4. Do students obtain a written record of each advising session?

- ☐ always
- ☐ only upon request (verbal or written)
- ☐ never

SECTION G	Duties. This section is to determine the functions being performed by advisors.
----------------------	--

1. At what point in students' academic level do you initiate contact? (*Check one*):

- ☐ elementary school
- ☐ secondary school
- ☐ orientation to first year of university studies
- ☐ during first semester of university attendance
- ☐ never, students must initiate contact with an advisor
- ☐ other (*please specify*) _____

2. How is the initial contact with students made? (*Check all that apply*):

- ☐ in person visits
- ☐ literature mail out
- ☐ video mail out
- ☐ computer disc or CD-ROM mail out
- ☐ web page / internet
- ☐ students invited to visit campus
- ☐ other (*please specify*) _____

3. How many undergraduate students in total (full-time plus part-time) are registered at your university?

4. How many undergraduate students in total (full-time plus part-time) are registered in your faculty?

5. How many undergraduate students in total (full-time plus part-time) does your unit advise?

6. Which of the following program planning activities do you perform with students?

- ☐ explain degree requirements
- ☐ help with selection of specialization
- ☐ help with selection of courses
- ☐ assist with scheduling of courses
- ☐ identify and explain special learning opportunities
(i.e. study abroad _____)
- ☐ other (*please specify*) _____

7. Are you responsible for reviewing students' records for promotion purposes?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

8. Are you responsible for determining that students have met all degree program requirements in order to graduate?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

9. Do you explain academic policies and procedures to students (i.e. appeal of assigned grade or academic standing)?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

10. For each category, please check the extent to which you have authority to make discretionary decisions.

	Extent of Authority			
	No Authority	Authority Only in Consultation with a Supervisor	Some Sole Authority/Some Consultation	Sole Authority
Rules and regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student appeals on admission decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student appeals on academic standing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student appeals on transfer credit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Do you explain non-academic policies and procedures to students (i.e. sexual harassment)?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

12. Do you assist directly in resolving student/instructor conflict?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes → How? _____

13. Do you explain policies and procedures to faculty and staff in other departments within the university?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

14. Do you explain policies and procedures to the public (you may include parents of students)?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

15. Do you perform liaison duties to promote your degree program?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes → ☐ within your university
☐ outside your university

SECTION H	Demographics. This section is to determine the academic and professional background of advisors. <i>(These questions are being asked of you as an individual.)</i>
----------------------	---

1. Please describe your academic background. (List all credentials.)

<u>University/College</u>	<u>Field/Discipline</u>	<u>Degree/Diploma/ Certificate Received</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. What was your job prior to becoming an advisor?

3. Please describe any related experience you had before becoming an advisor?

5. a) How long you have been advising at your current institution?

_____ Years

b) How long in total have you have been advising ?

_____ Years

6. Did you receive initial training in your advising duties?

☐ No

☐ Yes → Length of Training _____
Type of Training _____

7. Is your performance as an academic advisor evaluated periodically?

☐ No

☐ Yes → How often? _____

Please list the criteria for evaluation:

8. Do you sit on any university committees?

☐ No

☐ Yes (*please list*) _____

9. Do you train other staff?

☐ No

☐ Yes (*please list positions*)

10. In your opinion, what are the three most important issues facing advisors in performing their duties?

1.

2.

3.

Additional Comments - If there is anything else you would like add about academic advising, please use the following space to do so.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix B
Interview Schedule

1. How would you describe the relationship between academic advising and student development?
2. How would you describe the relationship between academic advising and retention?
3. Describe how academic advising supports the goals of your university?
4. Is your university doing anything in academic advising which you would describe as particularly innovative?
5. Explain how academic advising services for Arts students at your institution can be improved? (What would this achieve?)
6. Describe how the work environment for Arts advisors at your institution can be improved? (What would this achieve?)
7. In your opinion, what makes a good advisor? (Why?)
8. Would you say that Arts students' academic advising needs are best served by professional advisors or faculty members? Why?

My last question is:

9. Will there be any changes taking place in academic advising services for Arts students at your university in the near future? If so, what changes?
10. Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you very much for this interview.

Appendix C
Cover Letter

December 2, 1996

Dear :

For my masters thesis I am conducting a survey that will identify current practice in academic advising for undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts at English Canadian public universities. This is the first national study of its kind. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in this research project which involves the participation of administrators and advisors at universities across the country.

Your participation in this study is extremely important. Information we gather from this project will document current practice in academic advising and establish a knowledge base about the service from advisors' perspective. This will enable us to make recommendations for changes in academic advising policy and procedures.

The questionnaire will take about 30 minutes to complete. Please return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope as soon as possible. Your individual questionnaire responses will be confidential -- no one in your university will have access to your personal responses nor will results ever be published in a way that allows individuals to be identified. Should you choose to participate, your completed questionnaire will be taken as your consent to participate in the study. You may choose not to answer any question or you may choose not to participate at all.

If you would also like to participate in a follow-up interview, please provide your name and telephone number at the end of the questionnaire. To ensure confidentiality this information will be removed and stored separately.

The interview will take 20 to 30 minutes and be tape recorded. It will take place at your convenience, either by telephone or in person. You may choose not to answer any question during the interview or you may choose to withdraw completely during the interview without consequence. Again, responses are confidential and will never be published in a way that allows individuals to be identified.

A summary of the study's findings will be sent to all participants.

Appendix D
Specific Committees on which Advisors Serve

Academic Advising and Orientation	Special Admissions
Academic Advisors	Status of Women
Academic Planning	Student Academic Affairs
Academic Programming	Student Affairs
Academic Regulations Appeals	Student Health Advisory
Academic Regulations Policy	Unspecified Transfer Credit Review
Academic Review	Weekend University Advising
Academic Standards	
Access-Ability	
Admissions & Transferability	
Appeals	
Assessment of Written English	
Association of Counselors	
Audit and Finance	
Awards	
BA Program	
Board of Governors	
Board of Undergraduate Studies Subcommittee	
Calendar Editorial	
Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching	
Chaplaincy	
Curriculum Council	
Degree Navigator	
Direct Entry Task Force	
Disabilities	
Discipline	
Exchange	
Faculty Petitions	
First-year	
Honorary Degrees	
Krakow Semester	
Orientation	
President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment	
Plant and Property	
Records Management Advisory Board	
Scholarships & Awards	
Senate Appeals	