

# **OUTLINE FOR ADVISING HANDBOOK**

## **Introduction**

Introduction and Research Data

## **Advising Mission Statement**

## **Bibliography**

## **Section One – General Advising Information**

Strategies of Advisement

Characteristics of a Good Academic Advisor

Advisor's Responsibilities

Legal Issues in Advising

## **Section Two – Advising Policies and Procedures**

Registration Questions

Registration Procedures

Advising for Athletic Eligibility

Credit Transfer Policies

## **Section Three – Advising Challenges**

Referral Process and Procedures

Students on Academic Probation

Student Acad. Difficulty Analysis Form

Student Misbehavior

## **Appendices**

A: NACADA's Concept of Academic Advising

B: NACADA's Core Values of Advising

C: CAS Standard for Academic Advising

# MISSION

ADVISING MISSION STATEMENT  
FOR  
MCPHERSON COLLEGE

**Academic advising at McPherson College is an intentional relationship between advisor and student as they plan and reach the student's educational, career, and personal goals.**

Presented to, passed and adopted by Educational Policies  
Committee of McPherson College  
on November 11, 2005

Reconfirmed by Advising Task Force in Fall of 2016

# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### The Role of the Advisor

Much of the information below is selected and summarized from a sample handbook published on the following website:

Ford, J. (2003). Producing A Comprehensive Academic Advising Handbook For Faculty Utilization. Retrieved 7 Dec. 2005 from *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/createhandbook.htm>.

Though it's not necessary to explain what an academic advisor *is*, it might be useful to consider this expanded definition from the Committee on Advising and Counseling at Stanford University:

The University Adviser is the student's principal faculty adviser. His prime concern with the student, and the student's with him, is the identification of the student's aims and plans, his interest and abilities, and the planning of a coherent education that builds upon the student's interest and allows him perspective on and awareness of both his limitations and his strengths. The adviser does not plan for the student but helps the student to plan for himself (Study of Education at Stanford, 1969, p. 19).

The advisor is "...the student's academic advocate," interested not merely in following the rules, but in discovering the educational paths that will best guide that student (Study of Education at Stanford, 1969, p. 27). In the process, the advisor "conveys to the student a philosophy of contemporary education, a rational base for the consideration of problems, and suggests plans of action . . ." (Hardee and Mayhew, 1970, p. 21). As the student's advocate at the institution, the advisor is "expected to show a sincere interest in the student, become aware of the student's interests and abilities . . ." (Higbee, 1979, pp. 47-48).

A basic outline of the role the advisor plays might include these four areas:

1. The advisor will assist the student in effecting a program of study consonant with the latter's interests and competencies.
2. The advisor will assist the student in periodic evaluation of his or her academic progress.
3. The advisor will assist the student in initial exploration of long range occupational and professional plans, referring him to sources for specialized assistance.
4. The advisor will serve as coordinator of the learning experiences of the student, assisting in the integration of the various kinds of assistance rendered--health and psychological aids, remedial work, financial aids, religious counseling--the panoply of all services available to the students (Hardee and Mayhew, 1970, p. 11).

In order to play this role with efficiency and ease, the advisor needs to have within reach various documents produced by the college, such as the current catalog, the catalog under which the student enrolled, and the Teacher Education Program Advisor/Advisee Handbook (for a complete list, see p.13). In addition, the advisor should have a good familiarity with the college's general education program, graduation requirements, curriculum in the student's major, the course schedule (including special conditions such as courses that are offered in alternate years), registration procedures, student services the college supports (such as counseling, activities, sports, and student government), and various special opportunities the college offers (such as internships, study abroad, interterm trips, and independent study courses). Following Higbee (1979), NACADA recommends that the advisor know

. . . the mechanics of adding and dropping classes; changing majors; transferring from one university, college, or department to another; evaluating transfer credit or courses; petitioning for grade changes; interpreting grade point average computations; and keeping accurate records of each student's progress (NACADA, p. 9).

If the student has not selected a major, the advisor should be to help the student explore her or his interests, to refer the student to the Office of Career Services for counseling, and to suggest activities the student might attend or faculty the student might visit to investigate possible majors. When the student selects a major, the advisor should make sure that the student selects a new advisor in the major and that the student's advising folder is transferred promptly.

#### Limitations of Faculty Advisors

It's important to remember that advisors can't make decisions for students or get involved in students' lives in areas for which they are not qualified. Drawing on Hardee (1959) and Brown (1972), NACADA provides the following list of restrictions on the advising role:

1. A faculty advisor cannot make decisions for an advisee but [she or] he can be a sympathetic listener and even offer various possible solutions to the student's problem.
2. A faculty advisor cannot increase the native ability of an advisee, but [she or] he can encourage the maximum use of the ability that the student has.
3. A faculty advisor cannot reduce the academic or employment load of a floundering advisee, but [she or] he can make recommendations that such adjustments be made.
4. A faculty advisor should not criticize a fellow faculty member to a student, but [she or] he can make a friendly approach to any teacher if that teacher is involved in the student's problem.  
. . . .
5. A faculty advisor should not betray a student's confidence on matters of a personal nature, but [she or] he can seek appropriate professional assistance in helping a student with minor personal or social adjustment problems (Brown, 1972, pp. 94-95). [Of course, when the advisor fears that a student might do harm to her- or himself or to others, the advisor is obligated to seek help for the student.]
6. A faculty advisor should not attempt to handle cases of emotional disturbances which fall outside the behavioral pattern of students adjudged reasonably normal. When complex problems arise concerning financial aid, mental or physical health, or personal-social counseling, faculty should refer students to professional personnel through the Dean of Students Office (The American College Testing Program, 1979a, p. 4.149).

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# SECTION ONE

Strategies of Advisement

Characteristics of a Competent Academic Advisor

Advisor's Responsibilities

Advisor's Contacts

Legal Issues and Academic Advising

## STRATEGIES OF ADVISEMENT

**A. Attempt to become acquainted with the advisee in as many aspects as possible.**

Getting to know the advisee outside the formality of the office when possible, and not only during class scheduling or unusual circumstances can be extremely valuable. Knowing the academic abilities and background of the advisee is also important. Having good documentation such as high school courses with grades, rank in graduating class, ACT or SAT scores, transfer courses and grades from other institutions, and present academic status is essential when assessing a student's ability and future direction.

**B. Explore the objectives, interests, and motivations of the advisee.**

The advisee's actual certainty of future objectives and goals is sometimes difficult to ascertain. When the advisor has some knowledge of the advisee's non-academic background – such as home influence, hobbies, and friends – a more thorough type of advisement is possible.

**C. Develop rapport with advisee.**

If the student knows the advisor as a professional person who has a genuine interest in students, the advisement process becomes much more beneficial for both advisor and advisee.

The student should be encouraged to become acquainted with other faculty members in the department or division, for multiple contacts can be useful to the student who is attempting to assess his/her personal goals

**D. Become knowledgeable concerning college rules, policies, regulations and procedures that affect academic programs and activity.**

Every advisor must be well informed regarding current academic policies and procedures for these are the foundations on which all advisement efforts will be built. Review of prior policies and study of new policy changes should be a regular activity of each advisor before beginning each registration period.

Familiarity with courses generally taken by advisees, the characteristics of teachers of the courses, and how the courses have been appraised by prior students can make the advisement process smoother and more successful.

Suggestions for student involvement in campus activities is often the key to retention in school.

**E. Evaluate student motivation**

Enhancing a student's motivation by capitalizing on good academic planning can be a very helpful strategy. While lack of motivation is generally recognized as the most common cause of poor academic performance, no clear cut methods to help a student achieve maximum motivation have been developed. Suggested strategies might include:

1. Matching courses early in the program to the student's academic strengths, interests, and background.
2. Helping student, when possible, have a chance to build on success rather than failure.
3. Challenging capable students to continue their efforts toward academic excellence.
4. Explaining the rewards of a strong academic program and associated good grades.

**F. Be aware of the limitations of the ability and the responsibility of the student.**

Obviously an advisor cannot make decisions for an advisee, but can be a sympathetic listener and offer various alternatives for the advisee's consideration. Advisors cannot increase the ability of a student, but can encourage the maximum use of that ability. While advisors cannot change some aspects of class schedules or employment loads, the students can be referred to the proper offices for such adjustments when desirable.

**G. Seek to determine the level of advisement appropriate for your own comfort and training.**

Generally, advisors should not attempt to personally handle complex problems concerning financial aid, mental or physical health, personal or social counseling. When these situations do arise, the faculty advisor should refer students to professional personnel who are specially trained and knowledgeable about dealing with such problems

**H. Useful resources to have at your fingertips:**

Academic catalogs  
Freshman guide  
Teacher Education Advisor/Advisee Handbook  
Academic calendar  
Current course schedule  
Advising handbook

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF A COMPETENT ACADEMIC ADVISOR**

- Is personally and professionally interested in being an advisor
- Listens constructively, attempting to hear all aspects of students' expressed problems
- Sets aside enough regularly scheduled time to adequately meet the advising needs of students assigned to him/her and be available for discussions
- Knows college policy and practice in sufficient detail to provide students with accurate, usable information
- Refers students to other sources of information and assistance when referral seems to be the best student-centered response to be made, e.g. student services staff, career services, campus pastor, health referrals
- Helps the student assess realistically their college major choice
- Helps the student gain an understanding of their own abilities, interests, and goals
- Provides an integrated picture and information about the college with respect to courses, requirements, registration procedures, course changes
- Shows empathy and understanding of the transition to college
- Demonstrates personal warmth, respect and a genuineness related to problems present by the student
- Attempts to understand student concerns from a student perspective
- Views long-range planning as well as immediate problem-solving as an essential part of effective advising
- Encourages students to ask questions
- Shares advising skills with working colleagues who also are actively involved with advising
- Continually attempts to improve both the style and substance of her/his advising role
- Willingly and actively participates in advisor-training programs, both initial and in-service

# **ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

## **WHAT SHOULD ADVISORS BE EXPECTED TO DO AT MCPHERSON COLLEGE?**

- Have access to advisees' records in JICS. At the beginning of each term check your advising roster for accuracy. If you have questions or believe there are errors please contact the Registrar's Office (ext.2440.)
- Be available to students on a regular basis. For example, post a schedule of office hours for advising conferences.
- Establish friendly relationships and rapport.
- Discuss general adjustment to college.
- Discuss long range, vocational, and educational plans; allow the director of career services to assist you
- Know about and have easy access to resource materials (such as catalog and freshman guide) to answer questions about academic policies. Other useful resources are this handbook, the academic calendar, and class schedules.
- Know about resource persons to whom to refer students or contact directly for information and advice—dean's office, registrar, personal counseling, career services, etc.
- Know resources and opportunities available to facilitate in-class and co-curricular learning.
- Send occasional invitations via campus mail or e-mail to advisees encouraging them to come in for a brief conversation to see how they are doing.
- Help resolve academic difficulties.
- Help in the decision-making process in regard to course choice, vocational indecision, or personal problems.

# ADVISOR CONTACTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## I. Individual Student Advisement

The number of major advisees assigned to each advisor varies with the number of faculty and students within each major. Some major professors will advise certain emphases within the major, while some major professors may only advise teacher education majors.

All freshmen will be assigned to a freshman advisor. By mid-term of the first semester, freshmen will be assigned a major advisor and time will be set aside during ACE to meet their new major advisor.

While one goal of the advisor/advisee relationship is to encourage student-initiated contacts, a minimum number of advisor-initiated contacts are expected. Intrusive advisement is an appropriate and successful way to approach the advisor/advisee relationship.

## II. Minimum Contacts

- A. The freshman advisor will meet at least weekly with advisees during the fall semester in their ACE course. As part of their ACE grade the student will create a four-year plan in an EXCEL spreadsheet. The student will then send the spreadsheet to their new major advisor where the student and major advisor will review together the plan and adjust as needed during their academic career at McPherson College.
- B. The first contact with major advisees should occur after mid-term of the first semester to meet face to face, speak about education/career goals, approve a four-year plan, and review appropriate enrollment in interterm and spring courses.
- C. The next contact should be after the day(s) appropriate for enrollment in classes according to the advisees' classification (e.g. SO, JR, SR.) Students should have chosen their classes according to the four-year plan, **enrolled via Bulldog Connect before they meet with advisor so advisors can approve** their enrollment or assist them in changing it. Students' registrations will not be considered final until advisors **click the approval button** for their advisee.
- D. Minimum contact for major advisees is **once each term**. However, advisors should include their expectations of advisees in their Advising Profile.

## LEGAL ISSUES AND ACADEMIC ADVISING

The academic advisor is on the “front line” of the college in dealing with students. It is a critical position, and the success or failure of the student’s education and growth is influenced greatly by the advising function. In today’s litigious atmosphere, the advising function is more critical than ever.

Academic advising occurs under the umbrella of academic services. The courts have always hesitated to enter the academic arena and substitute their judgment for that of the academician. In doing so, they have recognized the academic freedom which protects academic decisions, including advising decisions. They have recognized also that their repeated presence in the academic community possibly could cause deterioration in the otherwise beneficial student-faculty relationship. Thus, if academicians do not abuse their discretion in dealing with students, they need not fear judicial intervention. The courts will intervene, however, if evidence exists of arbitrary or negligent treatment of students or a denial of their protected rights. The increasing number of court decisions dealing with classroom and academic matters attests to the growing judicial sensitivity to students’ rights in academic matters. The advisor’s job falls within this academic affairs area, and, thus, advisors must understand the legal issues involving four major areas: the **contractual relationship** between student and institution, guidelines governing **privacy of student records**, the concept of **privileged communications**, and **academic due process** and the need for grievance procedures.

### CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP

In academic affairs a contractual relationship exists between the student and the institution. The basic provisions of the college catalog, recruiting brochures, various bulletins, and the student handbook become part of the contract. The institution sets forth certain requirements for passing courses and for successful completion of programs and subsequent graduation. If students fail to meet the required standards, they can be penalized through such action as dismissal, suspension, or failure to graduate on schedule; if the institution fails to respect its own regulations, then the student may seek judicial relief.

Most institutions’ catalogs, including McPherson College, state that the ultimate responsibility for knowing degree requirements rests with the student. Generally, the advisor is not going to be held personally liable for erroneous advising in the absence of gross negligence, irresponsible behavior, or arbitrary or capricious treatment of the student. **Advisors should keep notes of their discussions with students during advising sessions. An accurate record of advising sessions would help solve any disputes over the content of previous advising and also serve as a legitimate protection against claims of erroneous advising.**



## **FERPA for Postsecondary Institutions: ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND STUDENT'S RIGHT TO PRIVACY**

Since advisors maintain educational records—records of advisees' grades and other academic information—they must understand the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (commonly referred to as FERPA for Postsecondary Institutions.) Basically, this act provides students with access to information placed in their advising files. Furthermore, it ensures that only school officials with a legitimate educational interest may see the student's file. Thus, advisors, upon request, must allow students access to their advising file. Students do not, however, have access to personal notes that the advisor may have made during the advising sessions. Under this Act, these notes constitute records made by educational personnel and kept solely in their possession. Advisors may allow someone who temporarily performs his/her advising duties to see the notes; if the advisor is to be replaced permanently, however, he/she should remove any personal notes from the student's file before transferring the file to the replacement.

### **PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION**

Although the law recognizes the student's right to privacy of his/her educational records it also recognizes the advisor's right to privileged communications. Thus, in an effort to help a student, advisors can discuss confidential information regarding that student with other appropriate individuals. The courts generally will respect the right to such communications and will not hold the advisor liable for statements considered as privileged communications. This right, however, is not an absolute one, and advisors must exercise good judgment in making all confidential statements. To determine the appropriateness of confidential discussions, an advisor should simply ask if such a discussion would serve the student's best interest.

At times, students will come to advisors with personal problems; normally these problems should remain confidential. In some instances, however, a student may tell the advisor of certain intentions that would prove harmful to the student or possibly to others, such as the intention to commit suicide or the desire to harm another person. Although the statements are made in confidence, an obligation rests with the advisor to immediately disclose such information to an appropriate party, such as the dean of students, the personal counselor, parents, or police.

## ACADEMIC DUE PROCESS

The courts have mandated that students receive due process guarantees of notice and hearing in disciplinary cases, but students with grievances concerning academic matters, such as situations involving erroneous advising, disputed grades, or alleged arbitrary course requirements, generally find themselves without due process guarantees. The courts, to this date, have not mandated legally what constitutes due process in academic matters. Courts generally will respect the institution's procedures for handling academic matters, as well as their decisions resolving these cases. As previously indicated, the courts will intervene in cases involving seemingly arbitrary or capricious treatment of a student. The voluntary application, however, of the spirit and principles of due process to academic matters can reduce the incentives for legalism and reliance upon the courts by students when they feel aggrieved. With clearly defined grievance procedures in place, courts will decline to intervene until a student exhausts this administrative remedy.

The proposal that follows provides an avenue by which students who feel they have been unjustly or arbitrarily misadvised may request a review of the advice in question.

*Step A:* No review procedure may begin until the student has discussed the advice in question with his/her advisor personally. (Note: This step may be waived in case of permanent absence of the advisor or as otherwise deemed appropriate by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.)

*Step B:* When the student, after consultation with the advisor described in Step A above, feels a continuing grievance, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs may see fit to confer with the student and advisor separately and informally, thus attempting to obtain resolution of the dispute at issue.

*Step C:* If resolution is not achieved informally in Step B above, the student should have the right to appeal to a committee of review established as follows: One member of the faculty of McPherson College selected by the student; one member of the faculty of McPherson College selected by the advisor in question; one member of the faculty, preferably in an academic discipline close to that in which the advice was given, appointed either by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs or by the President of the college. The member of the committee thus appointed by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs or the President may be from another institution than McPherson College. The appointed committee of faculty should examine any evidence submitted by the principals involved in the review. Following such examination, in closed session the committee should determine the legitimacy of the student's grievance. In the event that the grievance is found to be valid, the committee should recommend to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs what should be done. Decisions of this committee are final and subject to no institutional appeal.



## SECTION TWO

Registration Questions  
Registration Procedures  
Advising for Athletic Eligibility  
Credit Transfer Policies

## REGISTRATION QUESTIONS

### WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT. . .

#### ✓ WANTS TO DROP OR ADD A COURSE

1. Review ramifications of dropping a course.
2. Be sure to check if the student is dropping below full-time status since this may affect **financial aid, on-campus housing status, and athletic eligibility**.
3. Discuss with student the reason for the change. NEVER just sign a blank drop/add form.
4. During the first 5 days of class a student may drop a class with no notation appearing on the transcript. After that a W will appear on their transcript.
5. Students may add a course or switch courses during the first week of class. However, during the second week, as courtesy to your peers and a safeguard for the student, you should check with the instructor of the class to see if it is possible for the student to catch up in the new class.
6. Students may withdraw from a course until one week after mid-term grades are distributed (check academic calendar for exact date) After that students may not withdraw from a class with no grade.

#### WANTS TO WITHDRAW FROM MCPHERSON COLLEGE

1. Discuss the reason with the student if he/she is willing to share, or refer the student to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs (ext.2506), the Dean of Students (ext. 2501), or the Campus Pastor (ext.2503).
2. Direct them to the Vice-President for Enrollment (ext.2414) to begin the exit process. The student will be given an exit form with instructions on it to complete.
3. If appropriate, be sure to leave the door open for the student to return in the future. Sometimes students who leave are too embarrassed to come back, but a simple statement to say “if things don’t work out remember you may always come back” will many times make the student feel more comfortable to return.

## REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

- If a student is listed as your advisee and you think this is wrong, please have the student contact the Registrar's Office (ext.2440) to fill out appropriate forms (<https://my.mcpherson.edu/ICS/STAFF/Forms.jnz> )
- Meet with each advisee in the spring term in the days/weeks **after** registration is due for appropriately classified students to check their enrollment for the following year.
- Visit with student about how semester is going, if vocational/career direction has changed, and how that affects the choice of courses.
- Talk with student about any enhancements (study abroad, internships, etc.) that he/she may want to include in the degree plan and discuss how and when that might fit into the plan.
- Review requirements that have been met and review requirements that yet need to be met and update four-year plan.
- Overloads (over 16 hours) require extra charges (see Business Office). If a student has a 3.0 g.p.a. the student may take 17 hours without the Vice-President for Academic Affairs' approval. However, more than 17 hours will only be considered in very special circumstances and require the Vice-President for Academic Affairs' approval. **Students may not take more than 4 hours during interterm.**
- Inform students who are taking a course pass/fail, a course by appointment, a career connection, a field experience, an internship, a readings and research, etc. they **MUST** complete the appropriate paperwork before they will be enrolled in the class.  
<https://my.mcpherson.edu/ICS/STAFF/Forms.jnz>
- Once the student has completed enrollment in classes and you have reviewed this with them, **approve the registration by clicking "Advisor Approval" button.**

# ADVISING FOR ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

## I. Minimum Academic Requirements

A student athlete remains or becomes eligible by:

1. Being enrolled in a minimum of 12 hours each semester and 3 hours at interterm (if sport is in season). At any time an athlete drops or withdraws from a class that puts him/her below 12 hours/semester or 3 hours/interterm he/she immediately loses eligibility.
2. Earning 24 credit hours in the previous two terms of attendance; interterm is attached to the fall semester
3. Maintaining a 2.0 G.P.A. by the third season of competition and/or by junior status.

## II. Other Academic situations that affect athletic eligibility

A. A student athlete may repeat failed classes at any time and have them count toward full-time enrollment. **However,**

1. Repeat courses previously passed with a grade of "D" in the initial attempt and retaken, earning a grade of "C" or better, shall be considered toward satisfying the 24/36-Hour Rule.
2. Repeat courses previously passed with a grade of "D" in the initial attempt and retaken, earning a grade of "D" shall be excluded and cannot be considered towards satisfaction of 24/36-Hour Rule. Only the initial attempt shall be considered toward satisfying the 24/36-Hour Rule.
3. A maximum of one repeat course per term previously passed with a grade of "D" (or the equivalent) may be counted toward satisfying the 12-Hour Enrollment Rule.

B. Scheduled athletic events, especially those away from campus, may occasionally cause the student- athlete to miss class. Each individual faculty member has the responsibility to outline his/her policy for missed classes and missed work in the syllabus. The student-athlete should be reminded that she/he must notify the class instructor when he/she will miss class and arrange to complete all missed work.

C. Non-resident courses taken during summer should be checked with the Faculty Athletic Representative or the Registrar to determine if the course(s) will make a difference in eligibility.

## **CREDIT TRANSFER POLICIES**

Transfer students holding an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree may be admitted with all passing hours transferring and with general education requirements met, **UNLESS THEY ARE IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM.** If they plan to be licensed to teach they must fulfill the general education requirements as outlined in the freshman guide for incoming freshman students.

Students entering with an Associate of Applied Science, Associate of General Studies, or Associate of Technology will need to complete all foundation courses. Students with an A.A.S. or A.T. will need to complete only one comparable general education course within each of the distribution areas of humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.

Transfer students will be placed in freshman, sophomore, and junior seminar according to their classification at time of entrance, with the seminars that are lower than where they are placed being waived.

Only academic work from accredited institutions will be accepted at McPherson College. Credit accepted for transfer to McPherson College shall count as hours earned. Hours attempted and grade points achieved will not be transferred. Only courses in which a grade of C or better has been earned will be transferred as credit toward graduation (unless the hours are part of another degree). Consequently, a student's official grade point average at McPherson College will be dependent upon courses attempted at McPherson College. Exceptions to this policy are as follows:

### **Graduation honors**

Transfer students will be considered for honors based on either 1) their work only at McPherson College; or 2) their combined previous work and academic work at McPherson College. The level of honor will be determined by the lower of these grade-point averages.





## SECTION THREE

Referral Process and Procedures  
Students on Academic Probation  
Self-inquiry Routine for Advisors  
Academic Difficulty Analysis Form  
Student Misbehavior

# DETERMINATION OF STUDENT ASSISTANCE, REFERRAL PROCESS, AND PROCEDURES

## **Indicators of When to be Concerned**

Being aware of signals that indicate the possibility of problems can be helpful to a faculty member in making a judgment about whether or where to refer a student for counseling. The following signs may indicate that a student could benefit from a referral to the Dean of Students (ext. 2501,) or Campus Pastor (ext.2503.)

### **Unusual Behavior**

1. Withdrawal from usual social interaction
2. Marked seclusion and unwillingness to communicate
3. Persistent antisocial behavior such as lying stealing, or other grossly deviant acts
4. Lack of social skills or deteriorating personal hygiene
5. Inability to sleep or excessive sleeping
6. Loss of appetite or excessive appetite (starving or bingeing behavior)
7. Unexplained crying or outburst of anger
8. Acutely increased activity (i.e., ceaseless talking or extreme restlessness)
9. Repeated absence from classes
10. Unusual irritability
11. Thought disorder (i.e., the student's conversation does not make sense)
12. Suspiciousness, irrational feeling of persecution

### **Traumatic Changes in Personal Relationships**

1. Death of a family member or a close friend
2. Difficulties in marriage or family relationships
3. Relationship difficulties
4. Sexual abuse (i.e., rape, incest, harassment)
5. Terminal/chronic illness of a family member

### **Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

1. Indications of excessive drinking or drug abuse (i.e., binges, neglects eating or physical appearance, impaired thinking)
2. Severe drug reaction (i.e., bizarre behavior, unexplained "blackouts" of memory)
3. Being a child of an alcoholic or drug dependent parent

## **Academic Issues**

1. Dramatic drop in grade point average
2. Deficient reading speed or comprehension
3. Poor study habits
4. Incapacitating test anxiety
5. Sudden changes in academic performance
6. Lack of class attendance

## **Career Choice Issues**

1. Dissatisfaction with academic advisor
2. Unrealistic career aspirations
3. Confusion with regard to interests, abilities, or values
4. Chronic indecisiveness or choice conflict
5. Uncertainty of career alternatives

Taken alone any of these signals may be insufficient to warrant intervention. However, duration of behavior, combination of signals, and the degree of intensity of indicators will determine the type of intervention needed.

## **When to Refer**

Aside from the signs or symptoms that may suggest the need for counseling, there are other guidelines which may help the faculty member define the limits of his or her involvement with a particular student's problem. It is important not only to hear what the student is saying, but to be attentive to the non-verbal behaviors as well as the feelings underlying the message to you. A referral is usually indicated under the following circumstances:

1. **When a person asks for referral.** However, you need some information from the person to know where the best referral is. It is also a good idea to explore with the student how urgent this need is. It may be that the student is feeling quite upset and some exploration with you will help the individual feel more comfortable being referred.
2. **When a student presents a problem or requests information which is outside your range of knowledge**
3. **A person contemplating suicide. This has the potential of being the most severe of all crises dealt with herein.** Although there are wide differences in the seriousness of suicidal thought, any time a student is thinking of it seriously enough to discuss it with you he or she is probably pretty upset. Although it is important for you to help deal with immediate feelings, a threat to self or others ethically requires strong intervention on the part of the faculty or other professionals. In order to assess the severity of the suicidal thought, the Dean of Students (ext. 2501) should be contacted. Offer to walk with the student or stay with the student until assistance arrives. It is possible to save a life by taking quick, effective action.

4. **Someone you feel you have not helped, or whom you've gone as far as you can go with, but who you feel needs help.** None of us can help everyone needing help because of personality differences, lack of experience, or a variety of other reasons. When you have the feeling that you have not been helpful, try to be honest with the student and suggest a specific person or agency that would meet the student's needs. Also suggest counseling.
5. **Lack of objectivity on your part.** You may know the student on other than a professional basis (friend, neighbor, relative), may know the person the student is talking about, or be identifying too closely with the problem being discussed. Any of these may interfere with your ability to be a nonjudgmental listener. It would be better for the student to be referred to someone else.
6. **If a student is reluctant to discuss a problem with you for some reason.** You may sense that the person may not feel comfortable talking to you; for example, the student might be more at ease talking with a male or female, or a black or white counselor. In that case, you should refer the student to an appropriate individual and suggest that the person is very easy and pleasant to talk to.
7. **If a student has physical symptoms.** Headaches, dizziness, stomach pains, insomnia can be physical manifestations of psychological states. If student complain about symptoms they suspect (or you suspect) may be connected with their problem, it would be in their best interest to refer them to a professional, through the Dean of Students (ext. 2501.)

### **How to Refer**

When you believe that a student might benefit from professional assistance, speak directly to the student in a straight-forward, matter-of-fact fashion, showing simple and concrete concern. Never trick or deceive. Make it clear that this recommendation represents your best judgment based on your observations of the student's behavior. Be specific regarding the behaviors that have raised your concerns and avoid making generalizations or attributing anything negative to the individual's personality or character. If the student expresses a threat to self or others, **YOU MUST REPORT CONVERSATION OR BEHAVIOR TO one of three people; Dean of Students, Director of Student Success, or Vice-President for Academic Affairs.**

Except in cases of threat to self or others, the option must be left open for the student to accept or refuse counseling. It is not uncommon for students to be anxious when being referred to a professional. If you have had positive feedback from other students about counseling services you could tell the student you have referred others and that they found it helpful. If the student is skeptical or reluctant for whatever reason, simply express your acceptance of the feelings so that he or she feels free to reject the referral without rejecting you. Give the student room to consider alternatives by suggesting that perhaps you can talk about it later after the individual has had some time to think it over. If the student emphatically says "No," then respect the decision and again leave the situation open should he or she decide to reconsider. Above all, do not rush. Unless it is a matter of clear urgency, go slowly.

If the student agrees to the referral, place the call to one of three mentioned above, right then, with the student present. A home and work number may be left and the student can also be called later if one of the three cannot talk on the phone at that time. In most cases the student can be seen within a day. If it appears to be an emergency, ask to speak directly to the professional or to have your call returned as soon as possible. If appropriate, suggest to the student that with his or her permission you will give information to the professional about the nature of the problem. Have the student write down the professional's name, address, extension, and the time and date of the appointment. Having a confirmed appointment sometimes makes the difference in whether or not the student goes to the appointment. Finally, follow up with the student at a later date to show your continued interest even if he or she did not accept a referral.

### **To Sum It Up**

1. Find out enough about the student's problem to be able to make the best referral.
2. Involve the student in the process. Deal with the feelings about the referral (i.e., objections, fears, etc.). It is better to have them discussed before the student leaves.
3. Go slowly—except in an emergency, the student should be made aware that he or she has a choice to accept or refuse the referral.
4. Be very specific in the referral (identify location, name of professional, telephone number).
5. See how much help the student needs in contacting the referral—some may need to be escorted. On the other hand, try to let the person do as much for himself or herself as you can.
6. Follow up! Even if the student did not accept your referral, following up at a later date will demonstrate your continued interest.

Finally, the referral process is one that should communicate to the student that (1) you are concerned about his or her well-being and (2) you consider the problem one which requires professional attention, which you are unable to provide. These two messages, effectively communicated, can determine the attitude with which the student receives assistance. That attitude affects the progress and outcome of any professional intervention.

**ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY**  
**STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION**  
**THE ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR**

Many college personnel who work daily with students on academic probation find that those who are academically dismissed later make relatively common errors in judgment. Many of these students might have stayed in college if they had made different decisions while on probation. Listed below are some student errors occurring most often and the logic students use to make these mistaken judgments. In addition, basic information to help the academic advisor intercede and show the probationary students his or her mistakes in judgment follow each student error.

**ERROR 1 ENROLL IN TOO MANY CREDIT HOURS.** Students think they can “get it all back” through one heroic try and, thus, attempt to make the entire grade point-average improvement in a single semester.

**ASSISTANCE:** Students on probation should take fewer credit hours, not more. Students who attempt to make large grade-point average improvements in one semester usually find they do poorer work because of the multiplying effects of more quizzes, papers, tests, class hours, etc. A maximum course load for students on probation might be the minimum for full-time student classification (12 hours). A student who earns more average grades makes less grade-point improvement than the student who earns fewer, but higher grades.

**ERROR 2 AVOID REPEATING COURSES IN WHICH THEY EARN BELOW – AVERAGE GRADES.** Students fear repeating courses they earned below-average grades in and, instead, hope to make up the difference in other courses.

**ASSISTANCE:** Students who earned below-average grades in courses usually should repeat courses as soon as possible – at McPherson College repeated grades replace original grade taken at McPherson College in calculating the grade-point-average. Most students do improve upon repeating a course because prior exposure to the course makes them aware of expectations and study needs. Unless the student lacks a prerequisite for repeating the course, he/she usually should repeat the course to improve his/her grade-point-average and to remove the failure from the calculation of his/her grade-point-average.

**ERROR 3 ATTEMPT TO DROP A COURSE AFTER THE DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWALS.** Students believe they will receive special consideration because of their situation and expect to withdraw to protect their grade point average.

**ASSISTANCE:** An advisor should emphasize that a student cannot withdraw from courses past the established deadline. The last day to withdraw from a course without a letter grade is approximately one week after mid-term grades have been distributed to students and advisors.

**ERROR 4 TAKE ADVANCED COURSES WITH A WEAK OR INADEQUATE BACKGROUND.** Many students think they must graduate on time and, therefore, must not interrupt the sequence of courses for any reason.

**ASSISTANCE:** Students sometimes believe they must continue the scheduled sequence of courses in spite of academic difficulties. Students should repeat some courses, even when they earn passing grades, if they are weak or ill-prepared to continue the sequence. Often students refuse to take a short delay in completing a sequence, which, in turn, may cause a much greater delay if they are dismissed from school for academic reasons. Students should know the difficulty involved in mastering advanced courses in their major and should prepare sufficiently before proceeding.

**ERROR 5 TAKE ALL OF THEIR EARLY COURSES EXCLUSIVELY IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION AREAS:** Some students want to get all of the general education courses “out of the way.”

**ASSISTANCE:** Students frequently feel compelled to complete all general education courses as soon as possible. With this approach, however, a student may become discouraged and lose sight of the relevance of a total education. However, at McPherson College we encourage students to integrate their general education requirements throughout their college career. Thus, an advisor should encourage a probationary student to combine general and major course work, and when possible, to take at least one in his/her own interest area each semester.

**ERROR 6 SEEK ACADEMIC OR PERSONAL HELP LATE IN THE SEMESTER.** Students want to succeed on their own and seek help only when it is sometimes too late.

**ASSISTANCE:** Students often fall prey to the myth of self-reliance. They believe that if they are not totally independent they are somehow unfit or unqualified for higher education. Such an assumption is neither true nor necessary. Students need to know about resources available on campus and to be assured that using support services is expected and encouraged as part of the total academic experience.



## **ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY THE LOW-ACHIEVING ADVISEE**

### **A SELF-INQUIRY ROUTINE FOR ADVISORS**

- Is underachievement a problem with this advisee? In all areas?
- What capabilities can I infer from his/her folder?
- Has this advisee any physically limiting impediments?
- Is remedial help available that is free from stigma?
- Do I really know this advisee's interests? Can I utilize this information for more effective advising?
- Does this advisee have academic successes? Can I account for his/her success in some areas, and her/his lack of success in others?
- Have I begun to sow seeds of dissatisfaction with complacency?
- Do I talk with an advisee or to her/him?
- Would my assistance in planning a time schedule with the advisee be welcome?
- Have I had contact with the parents of this advisee? Do they provide support for his/her efforts?
- Is this advisee attending class regularly?
- Does this advisee know how to take notes? Does she/he use the library?
- Am I a potent re-enforcer? Do my advisees perceive me as a resource?
- Does this advisee's out-of-class life style support his/her education?
- Does this advisee have solid peer contacts? Is her/his tour at college a solo performance?
- Would some other faculty member be more effective as an advisor to this student?

## ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY ANALYSIS FORM

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Factors which, in the judgment of the student, are contributing to scholastic difficulty in specific subjects. Please indicate subject (history, biology, etc.) and check appropriate items.

	Subject	Subject	Subject
Not studying	_____	_____	_____
Reading problems	_____	_____	_____
Not handing work in on time	_____	_____	_____
Excessive absences	_____	_____	_____
Frequent tardiness	_____	_____	_____
Not spending enough time on lessons	_____	_____	_____
Health or other personal problems	_____	_____	_____
Not seeking help from teachers	_____	_____	_____
Poor background for subject	_____	_____	_____
Not interested in subject	_____	_____	_____
Working too much outside school	_____	_____	_____
Too many outside activities	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

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**Action plan:**

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**Student**

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**Advisor**

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**Date**

## **ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR**

SHOULD MISBEHAVIOR BE REPORTED? In most instances of minor misbehavior, the situation can be best handled within established structures and policies. In other instances not covered by existing procedures or policies, the advisor must use his/her best judgment, referring or reporting serious cases of misbehavior and maladjustment to the appropriate professional.

Keeping in mind his responsibilities to the welfare of the individual student, the organization, and the institution, the advisor will also need to consider such other factors as these:

1. Does the type of misbehavior cast a serious doubt on the individual's fitness for his objective? For example, consider the accounting major who embezzles money from the group treasury.
2. Can an otherwise worthwhile young person be deterred from other and more serious misbehavior by firm action and rehabilitative counseling at this stage?
3. Does the misbehavior constitute a criminal act, and will the advisor's failure to report result in his/her being implicated?
4. Are there serious implications for the institution's relationship with the community?
5. Is the misbehavior symptomatic of possible psychological disturbance on the part of the student who could require professional attention? The student services office, or dean's office may know of other similar incidents which, with the advisor's report, may indicate a disturbed student who needs assistance.

The advisor must not assume that referral to a professional will necessarily work to the student's disadvantage or result in his dismissal. If the advisor is in doubt as to the correct action, (s)he should consult the Dean of Students or the Vice-President for Academic Affairs on a confidential basis.

# APPENDICES

## **Appendix A**

### **NACADA's Concept of Advising**

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising.aspx>

## **Appendix B**

### **NACADA's Core Values of Advising**

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Core-values-of-academic-advising.aspx>

## **Appendix C**

### **CAS Standards for Academic Advising**

<http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/CAS-Advising-Standards.aspx>

## **Appendix D**

### **NACADA'S Academic Advising Core Competencies**

<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/About-Us/NACADA-Leadership/Administrative-Division/Professional-Development-Committee/PDC-Advisor-Competencies.aspx>