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**IN WHOSE INTERESTS?**

**NEGOTIATING ACADEMIC ADVISING
IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

presented by

Lisa A. Haston

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Major Professor's Signature

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# NEGOTIATING ACADEMIC ADVISING IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

By

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ABSTRACT

IN WHOSE INTERESTS?
NEGOTIATING ACADEMIC ADVISING IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE
DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

By

Lisa A. Haston

A quality academic advising program is the responsibility of many on campus and represents an interdisciplinary process that is potentially influenced by several different groups of stakeholders with often differing and even conflicting interests. Among these are advisors, faculty and administrators. With the increase in groups of individuals involved, there is heightened potential for the expression of different interests, beliefs, values, and philosophies. The ways in which these differences are played out and resolved—or negotiated—influence the overall nature and quality of academic advising for developmental education students.

The purpose of this study was to describe the nature of academic advising within a community college developmental education program and to understand the ways in which the process of Academic Advising is negotiated. To achieve this purpose, an in-depth, exploratory and descriptive case study was utilized.

Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine stakeholders of a community college developmental education program. Other means of data collection included document analysis and participant observation.

This case study demonstrates that academic advising for developmental education students at Mid-State Community College is a fundamentally contested process, characterized by several issues in which there is little agreement among the key players.

Negotiation of these issues reflects the power relations and interests of the participating actors.

Strategies used to address these differing interests among the key players reflect differing rationalities and alternate ways in which these groups use their power. In contrast to the dominant conceptions of academic advising as either developmental or prescriptive, these findings suggest that the nature of academic advising for developmental education is best regarded as inherently political.

By examining the differing interests identified in this study, we can better understand the fundamentally political nature through which these interests are negotiated, and the ways in which power is used to make decisions.

Although the findings of this study relate directly to academic advising in a community college developmental education program, they suggest an applicability to other two and four-year institutions, and to different organizational models of advising. Taken together, the political nature of advising and the assumptions about academic advising reflected among the key players in this study suggest three issues relevant to a wider range of contexts: authority, power, and inclusion. These issues help us better understand what values and interests are enacted within particular institutional and organizational configurations of academic advising, and ultimately the overall nature and quality of such institutional processes.

To my sons, Christopher Jefferson Haston and Matthew Jacob Haston, whose unwavering faith in me sustained me on my coldest days. You did not give up hope, so I could not, either.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completing a work as arduous as a dissertation, I am again reminded that "no one is an island, entire of itself" (Donne, 1624). And, as things seem to go, the longer I spent remembering people who helped on this project, the longer the list became. Any omission is not necessarily intentional, just the effect of a tired mind. With that caveat as my protector, I will proceed.

First and foremost, I thank my God and my Higher Power. No more words are necessary. Thank you.

To Dr. John Dirkx: Your gentle but directed guidance spurred me on and helped me to see in myself what you saw in me—that I could do this!

To Dr. Gloria Kielbaso and my colleagues at the Michigan Center for Career and Technical Education: You are the best second family a person could ever want!

To my committee: Dr. Marilyn Amey, Dr. Gloria Kielbaso, Dr. S. Joseph Levine, and Dr. Rhonda Egidio: Your commitment and dedication to bringing out the scholar in me is appreciated.

To the study participants at "Mid-State Community College": Thank you for sharing your stories. I hope I have captured them truthfully.

To my family: there are no words to say it better—Thank you and I love you!

To my sons, Christopher and Matthew: Lads, you never gave up on me. You believed in me even when I questioned my abilities. You two are unequivocally the center of my world!

To my parents, Dr. Charles and Marlene Johnson: My love of learning and value of education began with you. In all that I have done, my goal has been to make you proud.

To my sister, Gina, and her family: For always loving me and making me happy! Do I have to say it again? You rock!

To Granny, Mom and Pop: The best grandparents in the world!

To Jeff: On that first day on the MSU Marching Band field, did you ever think it would come to this? Thanks for your technical expertise and your support.

To Meredith Bowen and the womyn of Sistrum: I promise I will make up the missed rehearsals! After all, *I can't stop singing*!

To Judy: We did it! I wish I had half the confidence in my abilities as you have in them. Thanks for your belief in me and your love.

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*It is hard to imagine any academic support system that is more important to student success and institutional productivity than advising. Assisting students in selecting the courses they need is essential if students and institutions of higher education are to fulfill their respective obligations to one another and the society that has invested in them.*

*George Kuh, 1997*

## CHAPTER I

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

*Lynn: A cycle of failure*[1]

Lynn[2] is a 35-year-old female who is applying to Mid-State Community College after a seventeen-year hiatus from formal education. She is a single mother with two young children at home. Lynn works full-time at a minimum-wage job at a local business. She is returning to school to acquire new skills in order to make a better life for herself and her children.

As a child, Lynn never liked school. She attended inner city schools and books and supplies were hard to obtain. Oftentimes, students had to share resources. Lynn always seemed to be the last one to finish her assignments, and never quite understood what she was doing. In Jr. High and high school, Lynn never earned grades above a "C" and almost did not graduate. She had no aspirations to go to college and spent much of

[1] Dr. Charles Nolen, Program Director of the Counseling Center/Counselor coined the term, *A Cycle of Failure*, in the interview for this study.

[2] This information has been derived from a description of the process and student characteristics by study participants.

her time in vocational classes and skipping school. Teachers and counselors had told Lynn that she was not college material and should take business classes (secretarial) in high school to prepare for her future.

Lynn's family of origin did not regard education highly. Her father finished eighth grade and worked at a small factory nearby. Her mother graduated from high school but worked in the home. She had four brothers and sisters, none of whom went to college.

Lynn was the first in her family to go to college, an honor not valued in her family. In fact, her family could not understand why she would want to go to college at her age when she needed to work as much as possible to support her own family. Not only did her parents and siblings not support Lynn for her decision to attend college, they ridiculed and criticized her.

As Lynn begins Mid-State, not only is she realizing that she is under-prepared for college work upon graduation from high school, but in the interim, she is even further behind. She is entering college with self-perpetuating negative thoughts that tell her "I'm not going to do well or be successful. I don't belong here." However, Mid-State, like community colleges throughout the country, has an open door policy and will not discriminate against Lynn and other students regarding under-preparedness. Lynn will be able to enroll at Mid-State and take classes that count toward certification, an associates degree, or eventual transfer to a four-year institution.

Lynn, like many under-prepared students at Mid-State and other community colleges, is apprehensive about being in college. This is a huge step in her life and she is looking for someone to say, "You can do this." And, as Dr. Charles Nolen stated, "If

they don't get that message at the front door they are not going to stick around."

Lynn does not have a role model for "doing college"; she does not know what it means to be a student and does not have the requisite skills for success in college, such as organization, time management, study skills and balancing the different areas of her life. She has never been taught how to do that.

*Process of Enrollment.* After applying to Mid-State Lynn receives a postcard notifying her of the requirement to take the college's placement test. She is instructed to call the Counseling Office to schedule an appointment to take the Accuplacer placement test. Because Lynn was not planning on going to college after high school, she did not take the ACT test. Thus, as she has no ACT score she meets the criteria for taking Mid-State's placement test. Since Lynn has been out of school for a long time, she had already decided that, regardless of her placement scores, she wanted to take developmental courses, as do many returning students who have been out of school for a while.

Lynn schedules the appointment with the Counseling Office and arrives on the appropriate day to take the test. Within thirty minutes after finishing the test, Lynn meets with a counselor to receive feedback regarding her placement scores. As the counselor calls Lynn into her office, Lynn is struck by the counselor's demeanor—she seems very friendly and warm. The counselor offers her hand and introduces herself to Lynn. Lynn determines that Ms. Durfee is about fifty years old; she is wearing a skirt and sweater and has glasses perched on her head. Lynn notices that Ms. Durfee has a firm handshake. Lynn feels a bit more relieved already.

They enter Ms Durfee's office and Lynn is offered a seat at the round table. Ms. Durfee begins to talk to Lynn about her placement test results. Since Lynn needs to improve skills in three subject areas—reading, math and English—she is required to take Psychology 101, a course designed to assist students with their adjustment to college. Lynn and her counselor prepare her fall schedule of courses. At this time, Ms. Durfee asks Lynn about her academic and vocational goals and together they map out an academic plan for her future semesters at Mid-State. They begin with the upcoming fall semester. Lynn's counselor knows that typically under-prepared students need plenty of support and direction, so she places her chair near Lynn to physically and symbolically provide support and assistance.

Ms. Durfee hands Lynn a course catalog and asks her to look up the math course she needs, based on her placement test. Eventually, Lynn locates the math section of the catalog and finds the developmental course. Ms. Durfee commends her and asks her to locate the remaining developmental courses she needs. Upon completion, Lynn is asked to record the courses into a course matrix, which will become Lynn's fall schedule of classes.

Ms. Durfee explains to Lynn that she must pass all of her fall classes with a 2.0 or better in order to take the next series of math, reading and English classes. Until she successfully completes these courses, a hold will be placed on her course enrollment card and she must meet with her counselor to register for courses. Once she successfully completes her courses, the hold will be released and she can register independently of the Counseling Center if she chooses to do so.

Ms. Durfee asks Lynn if she has any questions but expects her to say that she does not, as many under-prepared students do not like to ask questions or want others to know that they do not understand something. The counselor also knows that Lynn probably will not talk much in class because ordinarily under-prepared students do not want to be "put on the spot" or identified in class.

Ms. Durfee instructs Lynn that as a student in the Developmental Education Program Lynn must meet with her counselor at least once during the semester to discuss any problems she might be having. Lynn nods in understanding and replies that she will. The advising session ends.

*The First Semester*. Lynn attends classes regularly the first few weeks of the semester. She is afraid of getting too far behind if she were to miss class. After the first month of classes, one of her children becomes ill and Lynn must miss two days of classes to stay with her child. A week later, Lynn's brother, while driving her car, rear-ends another car, rendering Lynn transportation-less. Getting to classes is suddenly difficult. Within a three-week period, Lynn's stellar grade record of all 4.0s drops to 3.5s and 3.0s. Lynn becomes very stressed.

Sitting in class, Lynn wonders if her instructor and cohorts realize the stress she is experiencing. She feels totally isolated and thinks she is the only one with these problems. In reality, the person sitting next to Lynn has similar problems, as do several others in her classes.

About this time in the semester, the Student Victor Program begins, whereby a counselor attends one of Lynn's English classes one-half hour per week to mentor the students and help them connect with each other. As part of the Student Victor Program,

the counselor works with the full class on advising issues, informs them of college policies and generally orients them to expectations of college.

Lynn finds this program very helpful. However, she notices that the counselor and her instructor do not talk much to each other or look at each other when the other one is talking to the class. At times Lynn's instructor says sarcastic things about the Student Victor Program and it seems as though the instructor really does not think the program is beneficial to the students. Lynn believes she is getting good information and assistance from these weekly trysts.

A few weeks later, right before mid-term examinations, Lynn's instructor announces that a counselor will be attending their class and will be conducting what is referred to as "In-Class Advising." The class learns that the goal of the program is for the counselor to gather some information about what the students want to do for next semester and will start registering them for classes.

On the appointed day, the counselor arrives at class with course catalogues and schedule books, and essentially teaches the students how to create their own schedules. At the end of that hour, the counselor announces, if the student has completed the process, the counselor will go back to the office and input the schedule. The student will then be registered for next semester.

This sounds good to Lynn. "This is great," Lynn tells the student next to her, until it appears that a class that Lynn really wants does not fit her schedule. The counselor tells her that she will need to attend *Academic Advising Day* next week at the Field House to try to fit that course into her schedule. Reluctantly, Lynn agrees to attend.

Towards the end of the semester, the college holds *Academic Advising Day*. On the day that *Academic Advising Day* occurs, the college cancels all classes. Students are highly encouraged to attend *Academic Advising Day* and talk with counselors and/or faculty members about majors, courses in the majors and classes to take next semester. As Lynn enters the Field House, the number of students, faculty and counselors who are there amazes her. Faculty members are sitting at tables identified with department names printed on banners. Students are milling around, talking in groups, or queuing up to talk to a counselor or faculty member. Most of the lines are empty, but the lines in front of the Developmental Education Program are very long. Since Lynn needs to get a hold removed from her registration card before she can register, she gets in the Developmental Education Program line. She asks the student in front of her how long the wait is, to which he replied, he had heard that some students had waited five to six hours to talk to a counselor. He also told Lynn that the computers had been unreliable all morning and there were only two counselors who could register all Developmental Education Program students. He wondered why he could not go to one of the empty lines, but was told no one else could take the hold off his registration.

Later Lynn learns that in addition to the long lines and crashing computers, all of the telephone systems of the college had malfunctioned that morning—there was no touch-tone registration and no on-line registration. Maybe *Academic Advising Day* is not such a great idea, thought Lynn. It sure did not sound like it was working *that* day.

Lynn finishes the semester and is able to maintain 3.0s and one 3.5. She feels that her first semester in college has been successful. Luckily, there were no more crises in her family. Her children stayed healthy all fall and her brother paid for the car repair. He

even threw in $50.00 to pay for her time without a vehicle.

Lynn decides the break between fall and spring semesters will be a great time of relaxation and recuperation. Next semester starts in four short weeks…

*Background*

Academic advising plays a critical role in higher education. Traditionally, the purpose of academic advising has been to help the student select a major area of study or an occupation as a means to begin organizing his or her life (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972) and to assist students in becoming lifelong learners and "effective agents for their…own personal development" (Chickering, 1994, p. 50). Advising duties within four year institutions typically involve such tasks as selecting courses and negotiating four-year plans.

While academic advising at four-year institutions is a well-developed area of study, much less is known about this process in other sectors of higher education, particularly the community college. Advising within a community college often presents a different set of challenges, particularly in working with "at-risk" or "under-prepared" learners. Advisors who work with under-prepared students in community colleges encounter issues that advisors in more traditional, four-year institutions rarely experience. In addition to not being fully prepared to address the demands of college-level work, these students are often dealing with a host of psychosocial and economic issues that set them apart from their more academically prepared colleagues (Frost, 1991; Long & Amey, 1993; Amey & Long, 1998; Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 1999; Grimes & David, 1999). To help them develop the skills necessary to succeed in college, they are

generally assigned to one or more "developmental courses."

Another issue that distinguishes academic advising for developmental education students from academic advising in settings that are more traditional is that, in developmental education, beyond the nature of the students, more stakeholders are involved in the process and its outcome. Among these are advisors, developmental education faculty, departmental faculty, and administrators. With the increase in different kinds of individuals involved, there is heightened potential for the expression of conflicting interests, beliefs, values, and philosophies. The ways in which these differences are played out and resolved—or negotiated— influence the overall nature and quality of academic advising for developmental education students.

Scholars of developmental education underscore the critical role that academic advising plays in helping retain under-prepared students. These students face the highest risk of not even completing coursework intended to prepare them for college level work. Attrition rates from developmental programs often exceed 50% (Boylan & Bonham, 1992). Only 24% of students who begin community college in developmental education programs finish their Associates degree at that institution.

Boylan (1999) writes that "with appropriate assistance, under-prepared students can be just as successful in higher education as their better prepared colleagues" (p. 2). Yet, many developmental education programs continue to struggle with the issue of academic advising. Work with local programs suggests that academic advising is not well integrated into community college developmental education programs (Dirkx, personal communication). Advisors complain of a lack of time for providing adequate counsel to these students. Faculty complain of a lack of communication with advisors

who are charged with providing services to developmental students. Students complain about being assigned to the wrong classes or not understanding why they are in developmental courses. One gets a clear sense that advising for under-prepared students is not working, but the reasons for this are not clear.

A quality academic advising program is the responsibility of many on campus and it represents an interdisciplinary process that involves multiple aspects of the community college's organizational structure. In addition to advisors and students, advising requires the involvement of faculty members and administrators. Faculty need to be knowledgeable of the student's academic standing in the course and of support services available to help students succeed academically. Administrators must be cognizant of *best practices* in student retention and success issues, and organizational policies and structures that are most effective in this effort. They must know and understand the characteristics of their institution's clientele, they must ensure that the college maintains high academic standards while adhering to an open door policy, and they must understand and enforce institutional policies and procedures.

Thus, several different groups of stakeholders with differing and even conflicting interests potentially influence the process of academic advising for developmental students in the community college. The purpose of this study was to describe the nature of academic advising within a community college developmental education program and to understand the ways in which the process of academic advising is negotiated among key players. To achieve this purpose, an in-depth, exploratory and descriptive case study was utilized.

*Study Rationale*

Postsecondary education in the past twenty years has experienced a transformation because of outside influences (Piedmont Virginia Community College, 1995). Severe financial constraints have resulted in increased accountability and competition for dollars and students; smaller numbers of traditional-age college students have forced postsecondary institutions to look to new audiences to fill their classrooms; new technologies are changing the way colleges and universities provide instruction and do business; and the value and need of a college degree is being scrutinized in the era of "high tech," hands-on learning and jobs.

Community colleges are not exempt from this transformation. Historically known as "open door institutions" (Roueche & Roueche, 1993) that enroll the most diverse student body in U.S. colleges and universities (Cohen & Brawer, 1991), community colleges have seen their numbers swell with new populations of students, including adult students, women, ethnic minorities, displaced workers and students with various learning differences and learning difficulties (Cross, 1981; Pulliams, 1990; Windham, 1996).

Community college students typically arrive on campus with added complex issues, such as work, family and financial concerns (Batzer, 1997). Furthermore, community college students in developmental education programs have different advising needs than do their academically prepared colleagues. These growing ranks of new community college students have necessitated the introduction of new programs and services designed to support their needs. However, which programs will be added? Which existing services must be excised to make room for new ones? Who are the key players involved in making these decisions? Moreover, how are decisions like

these made?

Many students entering postsecondary institutions today do not possess the academic skills necessary to successfully complete higher education. Most postsecondary institutions offer some type of programming specifically designed to enable these under-prepared students to succeed in college. These programs, when applied consistently and deliberately, work. A sound academic advising program can contribute to student success, retention and completion.

If, as Habley & Morales (1998) write, academic advising is one of the most important components on most postsecondary campuses for encouraging academic success, satisfaction and retention, then academic advising is not something to be conducted in a vacuum, but an essential partner of higher education's mission (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). This, then, firmly places academic advising in a role embodying specific duties and responsibilities and demanding participation from various institutional groups, with each group and individual member, by nature, possessing differing and potentially conflicting interests designed for program betterment.

A definitive definition of academic advising is elusive. Academic advising clearly exemplifies diversity, a fact that is evident when considering advisors' professional preparation, roles and responsibilities additional to advising, extant organizational models of advising, and the variety of members representing different interests who sit on advising program boards and steering committees.

Advisors hail from every academic discipline; most have at least a Masters degree; most are faculty members, others are counselors, clerical staff or full-time advisors; some have experienced advisor training, most have not had training; some

advisors work in centralized advising centers; some are housed in academic affairs, others are found in student affairs departments (Swensen, Bogenschutz, Kline, Seegar, Spencer, & Gordon, 1987; Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000).

In addition to the diversity of preparation which characterizes those who provide advising, academic advising also comprises many organizational models and combinations thereof (Habley, 2000). Patterns exist, such as certain models of advising being more predominant on certain types of campuses, but there are many instances of pattern deviation.

Considerable information is available on academic advising in traditional, four-year postsecondary settings. In fact, most of what we know about academic advising is derived from studying these settings. However, developmental education programs within the community college represent a much different context for academic advising.

Attempts to improve developmental education suggest numerous problems associated with academic advising for under-prepared learners, how advising articulates with the academic courses offered through the developmental programs, and how decisions such as these are made.

With the multiple constituents who are involved in academic advising for developmental education students, each possessing different and even conflicting interests *and* educational and training backgrounds, the different organizational models for advising that are prevalent on college campuses, institutional histories of politics and political relationships, and other such variables, one might question why a study on academic advising for adult learners in a community college developmental education program was even considered? And where do we go from here? One way is through the

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process of negotiation.

*Negotiation* is the medium used to arrive at consensus, or agreement, regarding which programs get funded, who the key players in program planning are, the audience for whom the program is planned, what content and format the program will assume and any number of other topics for consideration. In program planning and group decision-making, key players bring their *interests* to the planning table. Sometimes these interests are in conflict with other interests; sometimes there is consensus. When interests are cacophonous, however, it becomes the responsibility of the program planner to *negotiate* between the competing interests to facilitate program planning. Cervero & Wilson (1994) state, "whenever people are acting in an organizational context, they act within relationships of power in order to carry out their work" (p. xii). In this way, relationships of power form the foundation on which programs are always planned and on which planners must always act.

We clearly need to know more about how academic advising within community colleges is structured and delivered for under-prepared learners, the various roles and responsibilities that characterize such approaches to academic advising, the ways in which these structures and processes are and are not addressing the needs of the under-prepared learners, and ways in which advisors, faculty members and administrators negotiate their interests and arrive at consensual agreements regarding academic advising in developmental education programs at a community college.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to describe the nature of academic advising within a

community college developmental education program and to understand the ways in which the process of academic advising is negotiated among key players. The study addressed the following questions:

1. Who are the key players in the process of academic advising for community college developmental education students?
2. What are the views of the key players regarding academic advising in a community college developmental education program?
3. What issues can be identified from the descriptions that are manifested in the differing views?
4. How are issues negotiated within the developmental education program?

*Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study is to add to the body of knowledge regarding how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. This information can contribute to a deeper and richer awareness of under-prepared student needs and how academic advising can be designed to enable students to enhance their success in college. This information is beneficial to academic advisors, faculty members and administrators who work with under-prepared students in community colleges. It is also beneficial to anyone involved in group work where negotiation and compromise exist. This knowledge can prompt a fresh look at existing advising services, resulting in a strengthened role of academic advising, specifically for under-prepared students. It can also contribute to

higher rates of student success by aiding community college personnel in understanding the goals of advising, as well as the practices, policies and procedures involved in advising under-prepared students in community colleges.

*Definition of Major Terms*

The major terms used in this study are defined as follows:

academic advising: "a teaching process" which occurs outside the classroom, that addresses the students' entire collegiate experience and is concerned with the development of the "whole student"—intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual (MSU Adviser Manual, 1997)

developmental education: a general term that includes academic and social/psychological support services for under-prepared students (Miller, in Davis, 1999)

developmental education students: those students whose knowledge, skills, motivation and/or academic ability are below those of the "typical" student who matriculates at the same institution (Maxwell, as cited in Ender & Wilkie, 2000)

interests: attitudes, values and beliefs that compels a person to act in one way or another

negotiation: the focal form of action that planners employ in constructing programs

power: the ability to act, conferred to people by virtue of the continuing social relationships in which they participate (Isaac, as cited in Cervero & Wilson, 1994)

professional academic advisors: individuals whose primary occupational responsibility is in helping students clarify their goals and values, enabling students to know themselves better, plan an educational and vocational plan congruent with their interests, goals and values,

and gain an awareness of the institutional resources available

(Crockett, as cited in Gordon & Minnick, 1994)

under-preparedness: a comparative term describing a student's ability to compete academically with peers at the same college or university (Ender & Wilkie, 2000).

*Limitations and Delimitations*

This study will be confined to interviewing advisors, faculty members and administrators at a selected community college who work with students in a developmental education program. No faculty advisors will participate in the interviews. This study will focus on only one institution, located in the Midwest, which is currently scrutinizing its developmental education program as a means of overhauling and improving services to students.

It is important to note that the findings could be open to other interpretations than those that will be delineated. The study will focus on understanding how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. Suggestions or predictions will not be made about that situation (Janesick, 1994).

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

*Community colleges have played a predominant role in advising's latest rebirth, because they are the portal of entry for many new students such as older adults and minority students.*

*Gordon & Habley, 2000*

Community colleges in the United States, due to their open door policy of admission, are enrolling an increasingly diverse student body (Batzer, 1997; Valadez, 1994; Shaw, Rhoads, & Valadez, 1999). New arrivals on community college campuses include larger numbers of adult and women students, minority students, displaced workers and academically under-prepared students. In order to retain students and provide them with tools for academic success, community colleges have established programs and services designed to address the challenges encumbered by these students.

Developmental education programs exemplify these programs. Over 90% of U.S. community colleges provide developmental programs and services (Knopp, 1995; Boylan, 1999), including developmental courses, learning labs, tutoring, counseling and advising. For these programs to be truly effective, an interdisciplinary, integrated, collaborative approach to working with students in developmental education courses must occur, involving academic advisors working with faculty working with students working with academic advisors (Roueche & Snow, 1977; Maxwell, 1997).

There are many studies detailing the effectiveness of developmental education programs and many more studies describing the demographics of under-prepared students (Batzer, 1997). There is, however, little in the literature describing the views of faculty members, students, administrators, counselors and advisors regarding academic advising's role in developmental education programs on community college campuses. Further research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding and awareness of the goals of advising under-prepared students as perceived by the constituents involved.

## Academic Advising

Much has been written about the positive effects of academic advising. Frost (1991) writes that advising can serve as "a means of achieving success for students" (p. 1). Tinto (1987) posits that students who are "involved" in their academics are more likely to persist in college and academic advising is one aspect that contributes to student involvement and persistence in college. He writes that "one of the most important steps colleges and universities can take in becoming learning organizations is to reorganize their educational activities to encourage shared, connected learning experiences" (1987, p. 2). Tinto continues by stating that student learning is strengthened when students engage in "shared, collaborative experiences and take an active role in their learning" (IBID).

Astin (1994) states that students who have a college faculty member, staff, or other personnel with whom they feel comfortable interacting have an easier time adjusting to college life and a better chance of completing their education. This notion of shared learning and "mattering" (Astin, 1994) is applicable in academic advising.

Academic advising can be one tool used to connect faculty with students and to offer students an opportunity to become involved in their learning.

*History of Academic Advising*

In 17th and 18th century colonial colleges, college presidents were responsible for providing direction in ethical, scholarly and extracurricular pursuits to students (Cook, 1999). In the early 19th century, the earliest identified formal system of advising was initiated at Kenyon College, Ohio, when faculty members were paired with students. In the 1870s, when the elective system was initiated to motivate apathetic students, widespread use of faculty members as advisors was introduced. The elective system, which signified a fundamental change from the traditional classic curriculum of the early 19th century, utilized faculty as advisors assisting students with their course selection (Rudolph, 1962). By the 1930s, most U.S. college campuses had faculty advising, but specialization of faculty, lack of time and incentives and increasing numbers of students contributed to a less than effective advising system (Raskin, as cited in Frost, 1991).

During the 1960s, large numbers of students attending college masked the weak advising system, but during the 1970s, when numbers declined and students demanded better academics and service from their institutions, the problem was exposed and advising programs warranted attention (Frost, 1991). In the late 1970s and early 1980s academic advising began to look like a professional entity when the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was formed. This organization served to promote the field of advising and elevate the status of advisors. NACADA encouraged research and publications, which contributed to an increased interest in academic advising (Frost,

1991). It was during the 1970s that academic advising was finally considered a field.

However, despite this burgeoning interest in the field of academic advising, new theories defining advising and the formation of a professional organization, most of the reports and student surveys published in the 1980s described less than satisfactory advising programs in the country (Frost, 1991). In 1984, the National Institute of Education published its report on advising, *Involvement in Learning*, and called academic advising "one of the weakest links in the education of college students" (IBID, p. 5).

*Theoretical Foundations of Academic Advising*

The growth and identity development of academic advising on college and university campuses in the 1970s was due in large part to two phenomenon: 1) larger and more diverse numbers of students; and 2) faculty members who were increasingly more interested in conducting research (Frost, 2000), including research on students and ways of improving the college student experience.

In 1972, two researchers, Burns Crookston and Terry O'Banion, working independently, joined academic advising to student development theories, creating models of advising which were considered a form of teaching (Frost, 2000). Crookston's model, "developmental advising," was constructed around two concepts:

1) Postsecondary education offers students a means of planning for achievement of self-fulfilling lives
2) Teaching is defined as any activity that contributes to individual growth and development and that can be assessed. (Crookston, 1972, p. 12).

In developmental advising, the relationship between the student and advisor is integral. Although, the advisor adopts a teaching role, the student must assume shared responsibility for learning, not behave as a "passive receptacle of knowledge" (Crookston, 1972, p. 12). Long-term goals, such as life and career goals, as well as short-term goals, such as choosing a major and specific classes, are considered in the advising interaction. Students who engage in developmental advising typically spend more time in advising, thus contributing to their level of involvement and persistence in college (Tinto, 1987).

O'Banion, in his classic work published in 1972, proposed an academic advising model consisting of the "skills, knowledge and attitudes required for good academic advising" (p. 64). His model, also a form of developmental advising, was designed to "help the student choose a program of study [that] will serve him in the development of his total potential" (O'Banion, 1972, p. 62). Similar to Crookston's model, O'Banion's model advocated students and advisors sharing responsibility for student advising and decision-making. This model was highly regarded when it was first published and is widely used today (Grites, 1994; Ramos, 1994; Rooney, 1994).

O'Banion's model is presented as a five-step sequential process:

1) exploration of life goals
2) exploration of vocational goals
3) program choice
4) course choice
5) scheduling courses (1972, p. 64)

According to O'Banion (1972), the order in which these steps are presented is the correct order in which to approach advising the student; that is, first the student and advisor explore the student's life goals; next they explore the student's vocational goals, rooted in

the context of the life goals; and finally, a program of study and the requisite courses are selected, based on the student's vocational and life goals.

Upon perusal of this list, it appears very comprehensive; it has the depth and breadth that Kuh writes about (1997). Some authors, though, have found fault with this order, writing that in actual practice it is "upside down" and that "students tend to seek advice primarily on selecting and scheduling courses" (Grites, 1994, p. 81)—a type of advising known as "prescriptive" advising—and pay little attention to their life goals and its impact on their vocational choices.

*Goals of Academic Advising.*

Academic advising, as George Kuh (1997) and others have advocated, has the potential of being a powerful tool, offering the student a strong impetus toward student success and academic achievement. Academic advising is a complex and important component of postsecondary education. Its many features combine in ways that enable the student to successfully navigate his or her way through college and later through life. Advising is not, nor can it be, a haphazard approach to one's vocational and curricular decisions.

Several national advisory boards have published benchmarks for academic advising. According to the Mission of the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for Student Services/Development Programs (1997), the main goal of an academic advising program should be to help students clarify and develop an educational plan that is congruous with their life goals.

NACADA (1994) has published the Academic Advising Standards and Guidelines for postsecondary advising programs, which The CAS Board of Directors has

approved. The standards and guidelines state expected levels of performance, goals and objectives for advising programs. The nature of many of these standards and guidelines require that the advisor be cognizant of theories and practices related to, but not exclusive of:

- Teaching and learning
- Human development, including student development
- Special populations' needs
- Career development
- Decision-making skills
- Demographic and diversity issues
- Academic and personal problems and skill deficiencies
- Interpersonal skills

Also, the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for Student Services/Development Programs (1997) has identified the following subsets as comprising the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes that an advisor should possess in order to facilitate "good academic advising." So as to be able to assist the student with the exploration of his or her life goals, the advisor will be:

- cognizant of student characteristics and development
- skilled in counseling techniques and have an understanding of decision-making processes

As a means of helping the student explore his or her vocational goals, the advisor will:

- know various vocational fields
- understand issues of career development, including the changing nature of work in society

To assist the student in choosing a program of study and accompanying courses that are congruent with his or her goals, the advisor will know and understand:

- the various programs and courses that are available at the institution
- institutional policies regarding the courses (special entrance requirements, course prerequisites and graduation requirements).

The focus of this study is on academic advising programs and services for students in a developmental education program at a selected community college. Academic advising, for the purpose of this study, is defined as those programs and services whose goal is to:

- help students clarify their goals and values
- help students come to know themselves better
- help students plan an educational and vocational agenda that is congruent with their interests, goals and values
- help students gain an awareness of the institutional resources available (Crockett, as cited in Gordon & Minnick, 1994).

*Organizational Models of Academic Advising.*

There are multiple organizational models of academic advising, but patterns exist and particular models are more evident at similar types of institutions (Habley, 2000), although these patterns cannot be used for predictions. One distinguishing factor for contrast and classification is the notion of *centralized* versus *decentralized* organizational structures. In a centralized structure, there is generally a central administrative unit, such as an advising center, with a director and advisors. This model of advising is known as the Self-Contained Model (Habley, 1983).

In a decentralized structure, individual academic departments provide advising for students in their majors. Advisors in a decentralized structure are most often faculty members and advising occurs in their individual offices (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). This model of advising is the Faculty-Only Model. Another example of decentralized structures of advising is the Satellite Model, where advising occurs in

"satellite" centers, such as individual colleges within the university or individual campuses of multi-campus institutions.

Increasingly, advising programs and services fall somewhere on the continuum between centralized and decentralized models, and are termed *shared* models. Habley (1983) presents four models of advising which contain characteristics of both centralized and decentralized structures: the Supplementary Model—students have department advisors but there is an advising office which provides departmental advisors with advising resources and support; the Split Model—undeclared students (students without majors) see advisors in the advising center, while students with majors see departmental advisors; the Dual Model—each student has two advisors throughout college: an advisor in their major for discipline-related issues, and an advisor in the advising center for general issues, such as institutional policies and procedures; and the Total Intake Model—all students initially see an advisor in the central advising unit, then switch to an advisor in their department once certain criteria have been reached.

Academic advisors in community colleges are typically located in centralized advising or counseling centers, and more specifically in the Self-Contained and Split Models (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000). However, rural community colleges commonly use a Faculty-Only, Split, and Supplementary Models (Jefcoat, as cited in Pardee, 2000).

## Community Colleges

American colleges were established in the 17th century to educate the sons of white, wealthy families (Rudolph, 1965; Veysey, 1965). These early colleges were modeled

after colleges in Bologna, Italy and Oxford, England, which educated only the sons of wealthy white families in academic disciplines of ministry and law. These colleges served the purposes of an exclusive group from a young, developing nation well enough, however, after decades of growth and evolution, such a model no longer fit the nation's populace. This model of higher education lasted well into the latter 19th century when the Morrill Act, also known as the "Land-Grant Colleges Act," was enacted to establish higher education institutions designed to provide an education in agriculture and mechanical arts to a more general population (The Morrill Act, 1862; Horowitz, 1987; Gollattscheck, as cited in Lieberman, 1988). The establishment of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or the "GI Bill" as it was commonly called, provided a college education to scores of people who previously had not had access to higher education. This act forever changed the American higher education scene in that a college education would never again be considered exclusively the birthright of a privileged class.

The second half of the 20th century saw new entries into the American milieu (Horowitz, 1987). Immigrants contributed to swelling numbers of U.S. citizens; new commerce and industry forced the country to transform old ways of doing business, necessitating a change in workforce skills; citizens other than rich white males wanted a college education; scores of students from other countries came to study at U.S. colleges and universities; and the ranks of students under-prepared for college level work increased (Newman, in Lieberman 1988; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). A new model of higher education was needed.

*Characteristics of Community Colleges*

The community college was established in response to these needs. It was a uniquely American institution designed to provide postsecondary education to people who might not get an opportunity to attend college—a philosophy known as the "open door policy" (Horowitz, 1987; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Cross, in O'Banion, 1997). An open door policy meant that regardless of academic preparation, socioeconomic status, gender, race, age, enrollment status, family background, work situation, or other demographic characteristic, citizens who previously were unable to attend college now could (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1987; Gollattscheck, in Lieberman, 1988; Cross, in O'Banion, 1997).

The original goal of the community college was to provide an academic foundation to students planning on matriculating to a four-year institution (Stark & Lattuca, 1997). Over time, in response to local communities and employers' needs, community colleges began to offer vocational training and skill development programs (Levine, 1989). Eventually, community colleges also provided self-enrichment and leisure-time courses for senior citizens and others.

The community college movement was instituted at the national level, by executive action. In 1946, President Truman's Commission on Higher Education stated:

> ...the opening of doors of higher education to members of society who, throughout American history, had lingered on the periphery of the American dream of equality for all; members of lower socioeconomic groups, blacks, women, working adults and other segments of society would have educational opportunities previously denied them if the commission's goals were adopted. A number of goals would be achieved through an expanded network of two-year colleges. These colleges were to be so closely tied and committed to serving their communities that the Commission labeled them *community colleges*. (Vaughan, as cited in Lieberman, 1988)

American community colleges opened their doors at an astonishing rate. During the late 1960s, new community colleges were established at the rate of one per week (Cross, in O'Banion, 1997; Underwood & Hammons, 1999). This open entry revolution, which continued into the 1970s, also saw new students entering higher education who were not prepared to do college-level work (Cross, in O'Banion, 1997). Community colleges, as vanguards of educational change, considered it their responsibility to provide services for their students and began implementing developmental programs designed to meet the needs of under-prepared students (IBID).

For the purposes of this study, the focus was on developmental education in the community college.

*The Community College's Role in Providing Developmental Education*

Community colleges instituted developmental education programs on their campuses in response to several issues: the community college's open door policy; the enrollment of large numbers of diverse students, including academically under-prepared (Shaw, Valadez & Rhoads, 1999); and the national pattern of declining academic skills (Newman, in Lieberman, 1988). In 1988, the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges published their report regarding the role of the community college in developmental education. It said:

> We recommend that reading, writing and computational ability of all first-time community college students be carefully assessed when they enroll. Those not well prepared should be placed in an intensive developmental educational program. Community colleges must make a commitment, without apology, to help students overcome academic deficiencies and acquire the skills they need to become effective, independent learners. (p. 17)

The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that in 1995, all public two year colleges, 81 % of public four-year colleges and universities and 63% of private four-year institutions offered at least one developmental education course (2000). The report states that first year students at public two year colleges were more likely to enroll in a developmental course than first year students at public four year institutions. Knopp (1995) and others report that in the early 1990s, 91% of all two-year colleges and 84% of all four-year colleges and universities offered developmental courses (Stark, & Lattuca, 1997). Maxwell (1997) reports that in 1992-93, 13% of U.S. undergraduates said they were taking at least one developmental course and a 1996 report is cited that states 29% of entering first year students were enrolled in developmental courses. These numbers included recent high school graduates as well as adults returning to school after a lapse in time between academic pursuits. Although traditional-aged students were expected to be academically prepared for college-level work, many had not taken college-preparatory or academically challenging courses in high school. They, therefore, were not ready for college-level work (Parnell, 1985). Results of a study conducted by Paul and Orcutt (1994) showed that although 90% of high school seniors in their study planned to attend college, 50% were actually enrolled in courses that would prepare them for college-level work.

Community colleges are the postsecondary institutions that have carried the responsibility for educating the under-prepared students in the latter half of the twentieth century.

## Developmental Education

Developmental education is not a new concept. Although recently it appears that more press coverage has been devoted to developmental education issues and their origins, developmental education supports have been in existence since the early days of colonial colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000), when in 1828, Yale University offered developmental studies for students with "defective preparation" (Pintozzi, 1987). The first documented program in developmental education was at the University of Wisconsin in 1849 and consisted of courses in reading, writing and mathematics. However, due in part to negative stigma attached to these courses, they were eliminated in 1880. Despite their embarrassment at admitting that they enrolled under-prepared students, other universities, including Cornell, Harvard, Wellesley and the University of California at Berkeley soon followed suit and established developmental courses for their under-prepared students (Brier, 1984).

By the early 19th century, 84% of U.S. colleges and universities offered some type of developmental education course (Abraham, 1992). A century later, in 1907, more than 50% of the entering class at Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia failed to meet the minimum requirements in one subject or another (Brubacher & Willis, 1968; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

The enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided an opportunity for larger numbers of women, minorities and academically under-prepared students to attend college (Batzer, 1997; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). As more students with diverse situations began showing up on college campuses, the need for academic support, such as developmental education, grew.

Academic skills continued to decline into the 1970s (Colby & Opp, 1987; Newman, in Lieberman, 1988; Batzer, 1997) when scores on nationally-normed tests dropped. This reversed a 50+ year trend in which test scores had gradually increased, then jumped up markedly between the mid 1950s and mid 1960s, only to decline till the later 1970s, before stabilizing in the early 1980s through mid 1990s (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The authors offer inconclusive, but numerous, reasons for the decline in academic skills (p. 251). Among other influences, they believe the declined was due to several key occurrences:

1. decreased stress on reading
2. reduction in academic requirements and expectations
3. the effect of watching television on a generation of students
4. the less centralized role of the family
5. a decline in the respect for authority and educators
6. increasing numbers of ESL (English as Second Language) students.

Eventually, when academic expectations, amount of time spent in the classroom and the number of requirements decrease, student achievement, regardless of good intentions or measurements, will decline (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

In 1984, the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced *A Nation at Risk*, a report which summarized the problems inherent in the country's educational system:

> The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people...We recommend that schools, colleges and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards and higher expectations for academic performance and student contact. (p. 5)

Even though the report clearly called for change in the nation's school systems, change did not happen.

*Characteristics of Developmental Education Students*

Grimes & David (1999) write that developmental education students are not just students with lower academic skills, but they comprise a group with specific characteristics and difficulties (Frost, 1991). Grimes & David (1999) conducted a study to determine if there are differences between under-prepared and college-ready students. The researchers identified certain attributes that personify the typical developmental education student. They collected data provided by approximately 500 incoming first year community college students who completed the Student Information Form, a freshman survey instrument designed by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at UCLA. Results of the study showed that there are indeed differences between the two groups of students. Under-prepared students rate themselves differently than college-ready students on numerous experiential and attitudinal issues, including self-perceptions, experiences, attitudes, expectations, goals, values, academic performance and persistence (Grimes & David, 1999, p. 80; see also Maxwell, 1997).

This position is corroborated by Dirkx, Amey & Haston (1999) who found that in addition to the academic difficulties developmental students have, instructors of these students observe that their students' personal lives are disadvantaged as well. According to the researchers, many areas of the students' lives, including endless financial difficulties and unsupportive, sometimes even antagonistic, partners and family members, make it exceedingly difficult for developmental students to pursue their education. The instructors in the study expressed frustration over the situation because they felt they had little control or influence over them.

Roueche and Roueche (1993) term developmental education students "at-risk"

and write that they are oftentimes first-generation college students, from low socioeconomic and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, have low self-esteem and expectations of academic success and have not performed well in previous educational endeavors (Frost, 1991; Maxwell, 1997). Shaughnessy (1996) writes that students enroll in developmental courses for various reasons: some are adult students returning to the classroom after a hiatus; others are new high school graduates deficient in academic skills or requiring curricular review.

McCartan (as cited in Lieberman, 1988, p. 51) describes the high-risk community college student as:

- academically under-prepared
- undermotivated for college
- poorly informed (and perhaps unrealistic) about career goals
- employed off-campus
- young

Frost (1991) posits that academically under-prepared students oftentimes are dependent learners with a low self-concept, who need to experience academic success and are reluctant to get academic help. Many under-prepared students lack basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and study habits and are unclear about career goals and interests (Grites, 1982; Frost, 1991).

Considering Grimes and David's study (1999) confirming that there are indeed character differences between under-prepared- and college-ready students, there are real implications for colleges to provide specialized programs and services for their under-prepared students. College leaders must structure learning situations that provide an integrated perspective (Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 1999), concurrently facilitating the student's cognitive and affective domains, while cognizant of the fact that under-prepared

students, being completely individualistic in their degrees of under-preparedness, need programs personalized as much as possible—not mass-produced according to normed standards (Rose, as cited in Popejoy, 1994).

*Goals and Components of Developmental Education Programs*

There is a widely-held belief that students entering college should be academically prepared to successfully begin and complete their college courses and do so within an acceptable time frame, following a traditional course curriculum (Thomas-Spiegel, Patthey-Chavez & Dillon, 1999). However, with the swelling numbers of non-traditional students entering colleges and universities, many students do not fit this model. In an effort to improve the services offered to under-prepared students, designed to ensure their success in college, it is imperative that a fresh look at ideal developmental education practices be conducted and then compared to current practices.

Developmental education has been described as programs and services designed to retain students and equip them with effective basic skills so that they can successfully complete an academic or vocational curriculum (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Weissman, Bulakowski, & Jumisko, 1997). Miller (as cited in Davis, 1999) adds social and psychological support services to the definition of developmental education. These programs and services include tutoring and mentoring, academic advising and counseling, learning laboratories and centers and developmental education courses (Boylan, 1999).

Boylan (1999, pp. 4-5) posits that there are several components to a successful developmental program. These components include:

1. an institutional commitment to developmental education concepts and programming
2. services provided by well-trained people
3. services and programs that are student-centered and holistic
4. services and programs that are consistent with the college's academic standards
5. coordination and collaboration between developmental education service providers
6. services and programs that are based on articulated goals and objectives
7. a curriculum that integrates critical skills—such as critical thinking, diverse ways of knowing and study skills—into every activity
8. an evaluation component.

Other authors (Morante, 1998; Spann, 2000) reiterate many of these points and add other requirements to the list, including accurate assessment and mandatory course placement in appropriate learning formats (courses, tutoring, counseling, learning labs, etc.), on-going training and professional development for developmental education providers and collaboration between community college developmental education providers and secondary education leaders regarding requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes for successful navigation of postsecondary education.

Weissman, Bulakowski and Jumisko (1997) recommend that under-prepared students begin a developmental education program upon enrollment and be allowed to enroll in college-level courses while concurrently enrolled in developmental education courses, unless the student needs remediation in reading and writing, or reading, writing and math, in which s/he should be required to concentrate on a developmental education program first.

*Impact of Developmental Education Programs on Academic Success*

Several studies have shown a positive relationship between under-prepared students who complete developmental education courses and postsecondary academic success (Long &

Amey, 1993; Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1997; Amey & Long, 1998). Boylan, et al (1997) posit that several components have been mentioned most often in the literature as contributing to academic success: centralized program organization, mandatory assessment, mandatory placement, tutoring, early and mandatory advising and program evaluation (Long & Amey, 1993; Hanson & Huston, 1995; Amey & Long, 1998; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

Even though reports such as these tout the academic successes of under-prepared students who complete developmental education courses, the literature is replete with data stating that most developmental education programs have been ineffective regarding future prospects of academic success for students (McGrath & Spear, 1991; Weissman, Silk & Bulakowski, 1997; Roueche & Roueche, 1999). Grimes & David (1999) cite Adelman (1996) when they write that nationally, 47% of developmental education students graduate from college and only 24% of students enrolled in three developmental education courses graduates. Others (Maryland State Higher Education Commission, 1996; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000) corroborate these low success rates.

Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham (1997) and Adelman (1998) offer an explanation: although placement in- and completion of- developmental courses were inversely related to student performance and success, it did not cause that performance. Adelman writes that students who did not enroll in developmental courses graduated at a rate of 60%, while those who took five developmental courses, the "least academically prepared," graduated at 35% (p. 75), indicating that the weaker students graduated only three-fifths as often as their stronger cohorts. Boylan, et al suggest that developmental education programs, by design, enroll larger numbers of the weakest students, who

consequently have lower cumulative GPA and retention rates.

*Role of Academic Advising in Developmental Education*

Under-prepared students differ considerably from their academically prepared cohorts in many ways (Frost, 1991; Long & Amey, 1993; Amey & Long, 1998; Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 1999; Grimes & David, 1999). Under-prepared students arrive on community college campuses with myriad academic preparations, demographical backgrounds and educational goals, so diverse, in fact, that a comprehensive definition of under-preparedness is impractical (Amey & Long, 1998; Shaw, Rhoads, & Valadez, 1999; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). In addition to being academically under-prepared and struggling with coursework, these students may be working full time, they may have family responsibilities, they may have little or no support from family members, some are high school dropouts, some may be learning- disabled or products of poor school districts, many have economic hardships, some are recovering from substance abuse or mental illness, some are international students or students for whom English is their second language, some were told they could not learn and would never amount to anything (Maxwell, 1997).

A report sponsored by the American Council on Education (Knopp, 1996) shows that students typifying the developmental education student are white, from low-income families, were not born in the U.S. and do not speak English at home. Oftentimes, they are not aware of what college-level work is and what professors expect. Maxwell writes that "often they don't know what they don't know" (p. 2, 1997). Because of factors such as these, advisors must be more proactive and directive in assisting under-prepared

students than with academically prepared students. A system of early and intrusive advising, mandatory testing and placement, tutoring and mentoring, academic skills development and completion of developmental courses designed to enhance their academic foundations is warranted if under-prepared students are to survive in college (Long & Amey, 1993; Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1997; Maxwell, 1997; Amey & Long, 1998; Morante, 1998; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

Academic advising is an important component of a model developmental education program (Kull, 2000). The role of an advisor in a developmental education program at a community college is different from that of a typical advisor in a centralized advising center on two- or four-year institution (Maxwell, 1997). Advisors who work with developmental education students may still advise on issues of life goals, vocational interests and strengths and course selection, (O'Banion, 1972), but their primary responsibility is to provide support and information to students and faculty regarding institutional programs and services designed for student success (Maxwell, 1997).

Academic advisors who work with under-prepared students must take a proactive, preventative position with these students. The advisors must engage in early and intrusive advising (Amey & Long, 1998; Morante, 1998; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000), as well as advising throughout the first semester (Maxwell, 1997). Donovan (1975) stated that a successful academic program is one where the students are provided with an atmosphere of "tough love," not one where they are given choices.

This philosophy is exemplified by Xavier College in New Orleans, a small college that, since 1993, is first in the nation in placing African American students into medical school with almost all placements eventually graduating from medical school

and becoming doctors (Maxwell, 1997). The belief behind the Xavier College success is that frequent, intrusive and intensive support and attention will propel the student toward academic accomplishment. This, Maxwell writes, is a different approach than the customary practice of enrolling students and letting them "sink or swim—it's the student's decision" (1997, p. 20).

A recent study examined teacher beliefs and assumptions regarding change at an urban, Midwest community college (Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 1999). The researchers studied community college teachers as they worked towards curricular and institutional transformation. The study's findings suggest that a college's advising program has great power to enhance or weaken institutional transformation.

During the study, it became apparent that one faction of the college, namely academic advising, could play an integral role in the success or failure of institutional transformation and in fact, in this situation, the advising program was informally associated with the lack of transformational success. In interviews with students in the study, many said that they were dissatisfied with the advising they had received and moreover found it to be detrimental to their academic success.

Others (Opp & Colby, 1986; Platt 1995) have corroborated this position. Platt (1995) provides information on the annual report from The Learning Center (LC) at South Plains College (SPC) in Texas. She writes that of the 1,129 students who took the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) math test, only 497 (44%) met the remediation standard and 126 students failed all three parts of the test. Case studies were conducted on three of these students and findings indicated that in each case appropriate academic advising could have placed the students in proper courses, thereby resulting in increased

chances for their academic success.

As is evident from the previous discussion, the planning and delivery of academic advising for developmental education students at a community college often involves multiple aspects of the organization. In this section, I address how we might think of this organizational and planning more theoretically.

## Negotiation

Program planning or group decision-making is always conducted in a contextual manner—that is to say that many elements impact the process of program planning. Cervero and Wilson (1994) describe program planning as "a social activity in which people negotiate personal and organizational interests" (p. xiii). Programs, they posit, are designed by planners in complex organizations, each of which has specific agendas, traditions and political relationships that must be considered as programs are planned and realized. In this regard, program planning and requisite group work cannot be performed absent the presence of these individual, organizational and societal needs and interests, which are not always necessarily consensual. Consequently, group work focuses on ways to negotiate involved interests in order to facilitate program creation and implementation.

A literature review on program planning revealed that planning historically has been approached from a fairly technical-rational manner but Cervero and Wilson's (1994) work and others seem to challenge this notion, stressing the interpretive and even political nature of the planning process. Most often missing in program planning theories is the *people work* which is inherent in program planning and group work—the political, the social, and the individual to which Wilson and Cervero refer (1996). In concurrence,

Sandmann, in her study of cooperative extension agents, writes that:

> The educators didn't see program development as a step-by-step process...They spent much of their time trying to alleviate the tensions that resulted from conflicts between the amount of time available, and inevitable interruptions among differing organizational clientele, community, and personal goals (1993, as cited in Wilson & Cervero, 1996, p. 7).

Cervero and Wilson identified four concepts that are fundamental in program planning: power, interests, negotiation and responsibility (1994; 1996). The authors argue that planning activities always occur in situations involving issues of *power*, by people with *interests* that are not always compatible, wherein *negotiation* is the medium necessary to reach accord. It becomes the *responsibility* of program planners, then, to facilitate negotiations between the various stakeholders involved in planning.

In comparing Cervero and Wilson's approach to planning with traditional viewpoints of planning, there are areas of disconnect. Such a format often does not consider power relationships and how influential they are on group actions and behaviors. Traditional planning theory advises to follow prescribed steps in sequence and absolutely, and all will be fine. But, again, important factors are disregarded, such as flexibility in periods of uncertainty, dwindling and shifting resources, institutional policies, personnel changes, public image, and other contextual factors. In other words, the human element working within structured organizational and implicit power relationships oftentimes is overlooked and neglected. Planning involves "people work," and by nature, people work tends to be political and influenced by issues of power, personal and professional interests, limited resources, changing priorities, and transient personnel. Since these elements of political and contextual influences are customarily omitted in traditional planning theory, successful planning ventures are more dependent on the context—what

is "doable" in a particular context versus what planning theory says can be done (Cervero and Wilson, 1996, p. 8).

A second problem with a prescribed formula for program planning is that planning is composed of significantly more factors than traditional planning theory insinuates. Such a prescribed formula ignores details such as determining which personnel should participate in the group, understanding individual interests and how they influence decision-making, persuading associates and superiors of the importance of their programs, procuring resources from limited sources, and maximizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses (Wilson & Cervero, 1996). In responding to and considering these issues it is apparent that program planning is a shared, or social, activity and that planners must interact with their organization's culture, which includes institutional and personal interests, organizational history and mission, available resources, and political climates.

Program planners must understand existing institutional power relationships and anticipate how these relationships might effect the work they are attempting to do. In order to create educational programs, it is incumbent upon the planners to be able to negotiate among the various stakeholders' interests. In fact, Cervero and Wilson write that it is "the planner [who] is responsible for negotiating the interests of all people who may be affected by the educational program" (1994, p. 5). "Negotiating interests," the authors posit, "is central to planning" (IBID, p. 13).

Intrinsic to this notion of "people work" is the idea of "acting responsibly in the face of power" (Cervero and Wilson, 1994, p. xii). Planners must address questions like the following as they plan their programs:

- For whom are these educational programs being developed?
- To whom are the planners responsible?
- Who are the decision-makers regarding program goals, design, and subject matter?

*Ways in which Decisions are made Regarding Interests*

Cervero and Wilson (1994) posit that "a central truth about planning" is that "it is accomplished in a world of power relationships...that define the terrain on which planners must act" (p. 117). They clarify by stating:

> Adult educators always plan programs in contexts defined by a concrete set of power relationships and associated interests. These concepts (power and interests) and their relationships structure planners' action in planning practice (p. 119).

The authors cite Forester (1989) who stated that the enactment of power in real situations always results in negotiation among the participants. To say that power is an essential part of program planning is not to say that conflict is always present. Oftentimes, Cervero and Wilson (1994) assert, power is evidenced in rather noneventful ways. Jane Durfee referred to this phenomenon:

> You have...people [with] different types of opinions. Essentially [the decision] goes in front of the Vice Presidents and the Deans. ... but they're...going on the decision that the committee did some work on it when they made the decision [and] that it was a good decision.

A caveat is appropriate here: typically, this power is exercised in overt ways in which one planner exerts power over others. But there are times when the power is more collegial and shared somewhat symmetrically with all participants. There are different types of responses for the different types of power relationships that exist. It is

incumbent upon program planners to be familiar with the various types of power relationships they may face in program planning.

*A Template for Action*

Cervero and Wilson (1994) borrow from Forrester (1989) to present a conceptual matrix describing four different ways that power relationships and interests can intersect and guide the work of program planners (p. 128). See Figure 1.

*The Political Boundedness of Nurturing a Substantively Democratic Planning Process*

**Figure 1**

| *Relations Among Legitimate Interests* | Source of the Power Relations: Socially Ad Hoc | Source of the Power Relations: Socially Systematic |
|---|---|---|
| Consensual | Bounded Rationality 1: Individual Limits<br>*Strategy*: Satisfice | Bounded Rationality 2: Social Differentation<br>*Strategy*: Network |
| Conflictual | Bounded Rationality 3: Pluralist conflict<br>*Strategy*: Bargain | Bounded Rationality 4: Structural Legitimation<br>*Strategy*: Counteract |

*Source:* Adapted from Forester, 1989, pp.34, 53.

Regarding *Source of the Power Relations*, there are *Socially Ad Hoc* relations—representing short-term conditions or relationships, and *Socially Systematic*—representing existing conditions or relationships, which are generally unchanging in nature. *Relations among Legitimate Interests* also has two dimensions: *Consensual*—same or similar interests, and *Conflictual*—different or competing interests. These differences are important, Cervero and Wilson write (1994) because when planners

holding different interests are involved in planning, the planner with the most power will generally use it to their advantage. The authors advise that to plan responsibly, planners must recognize the planning situation in which they are operating, and then employ the appropriate strategy of response (Cervero and Wilson, 1994).

Each of the four quadrants will be discussed individually below. In Chapter VII, examples from this study will be used to support the different situations.

Another caveat: a matrix such as this cannot possibly encompass all the diverse types of situations in which planners will inevitably find themselves. The authors present this matrix merely as a template representing one model—theirs—of program planning. Program planning, and other things, are not so neatly defined in a cell.

*Bounded Rationality 1—Individual Limits.* In *Individual Limits*, decision makers or planners face no major conflict from other members but the terms of the relationship are not existant or continuing. Oftentimes there are insufficient resources, including time and support, and incomplete information. The suggested strategy for responding in this situation is *satisficing*. Cervero and Wilson (1994, p. 131) cite Knox (1982) who indicated that "In contrast with idealized models of rational and goal-maximizing decision making, most able administrators 'satisficed' or muddled through by accepting courses of action that were merely satisfactory rather than best."

*Bounded Rationality 2—Social Differentiation.* In *Social Differentiation*, group participants have consensual interests and are involved in existing organizational or political systems. This is not to say that this type of situation is without conflict. According to Cervero and Wilson (1994) it can actually be more complicated than the situation in the first cell due to the various interpretations of the program or decision that

must be negotiated. Individuals in this type of environment have an invested interest in the situation, thus it is important for the planner to involve the others in pertinent parts of planning or decision-making. As Cervero and Wilson (1994) write, "The key here is forming and maintaining relationships with people who regularly contribute to the program planning in a particular setting" (p. 133). The authors advocate *networking* as the preferred strategy to manage this type of situation.

*Bounded Rationality 3—Pluralist Conflict.* In the Pluralist Conflict, resistance and conflict exist amid temporary relationships, sometimes lasting only as long as the planning or decision-making phase lasts. This is not a cooperative situation, the authors report. In fact, group participants are mainly interested in advancing their own agendas and use resources like time and information for this purpose (Cervero and Wilson, 1994, p. 134). Issues of trust arise and participants use "asymmetrical relationships of power" to advance their interests (IBID, p. 133). Networking will not work well in this situation; the authors advise *bargaining* between the conflicting interests.

*Bounded Rationality 4—Structural Legitimation.* In *Structural Legitimation*, participants holding competing interests are involved in asymmetrical power relationships that are entrenched in existing organizational or political systems. Individuals with the power are the ones who get their interests furthered. Cervero and Wilson maintain that the strategy best equipped to manage these guidelines is to *counteract* (1994).

## Summary

In this literature review, theoretical frameworks related to academic advising, community

colleges, developmental education and negotiation have been presented. The interplay of these four areas meets at the place where this study begins. How do group members involved with academic advising issues in a community college developmental education program negotiate their interests? What factors play into this process? How are these factors managed? Using these four frameworks, this study looks at academic advising for adult learners in a community college developmental education program.

*Transition to methodology*

The next chapter addresses the design of the study and is structured in the following way: The qualitative case study *Research Design* is presented, followed by information describing the *Context and Setting of the Study*, the *Population and Selection of Participants* and *Participant Profiles.* The section on *Data Collection* describes the in-depth *Interviews* I conducted with the nine study participants, and *Document Analysis and Participant Observation.* I describe the methods used with the data in the section titled *Data Analysis.* The Chapter concludes with *Reporting the Findings.*

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

*Although academic advising is just one component of undergraduate education, it is at the core of learning. Thus, by its nature, it is a likely place for change to begin.*

*Frost, 2000*

This study outlines an in-depth, exploratory, and descriptive case study of academic advising for developmental education students within one community college. The purpose of this study was to describe the nature of academic advising within a community college developmental education program and to understand the ways in which the process of academic advising is negotiated among key players involved. The research design was intended to address questions such as the following and was considered through the perspective of each of the chosen groups:

1. Who are the key players in the process of academic advising for community college developmental education students?
2. What are the views of the key players regarding academic advising in a community college developmental education program?
3. What issues can be identified from the descriptions that are manifested in the differing views?
4. How are issues negotiated within the developmental education program?

*Research Design*

This study utilized a qualitative method case study consisting of semi-structured interviews with community college faculty, administrators and academic advisors regarding how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. Creswell (1994) writes that in a case study,

> The researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon ('the case') bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution or social group) and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (p. 12).

Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) suggest that case studies are generally done for one of three reasons: to describe, explain or evaluate a phenomenon. The rationale for using this methodology is befitting: to produce a *description* of a phenomenon—in this case, how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program.

Creswell (1994) defines a qualitative study as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (p. 1-2). In a qualitative study, the researcher starts with broad questions, gathers vast amounts of data generally from small numbers of informants, induces conclusions from the data gathered (Leedy, 1997, p. 105), and presents them with words. In this type of study, the researcher endeavors to understand the participants from their own perspectives by "attempt[ing] to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subject" (Geertz, 1992, p. 34). This approach necessitates the use of interpretation because in trying to enter the subject's world, the researcher inevitably brings her biases and "points

of view" to the situation. It is important to acknowledge these biases in the research report and I did. But it is also important to remember that there are myriad ways to interpret others' experiences and it is through interacting with them that we can attempt to understand their reality. This approach made use of traditional qualitative methods, such as interviews, document analysis, and participant observation.

*Context and Setting of the Study*

This study focused on how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. The selected community college, Mid-State Community College, was chosen because it has a developmental education program for under-prepared students currently in service.

Mid-State is located in the heart of a large, urban Midwest city. It offers instruction on several off-site locations in the metropolitan area, serving approximately 20,000 credit and non-credit students annually. The college employs 500 faculty, with equal numbers of full-time and part-time instructors, and ten academic advisors and counselors. The college, founded in 1914, was the first community college in the state, and has been accredited continuously since 1917 by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Mid-State Community College is comprised of two schools: The School of Arts and Sciences and The School of Workforce Development, and currently serves over 400 local businesses annually with its job training and retraining programs.

In addition to traditional classroom settings, students may also enroll in distance learning courses, seminars, workshops, training classes, and participate in community

service offerings and other educational programs. The college is committed to preparing their developmental students for college and/or work. Its mission states that "All students are encouraged, supported, and given opportunities and the means to reach their goals within their own learning styles."

*Population and Selection of Participants*

*Gaining access.* Burgess (1984) defines *access* as obtaining institutional consent to do research at that location. Bogdan & Taylor (1975) state the importance of getting permission from the 'gatekeepers' before going into the setting where data will be collected. My study was conducted at a community college, thus approval for my research was procured from the college's Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, under whose joint leadership the advising services are located. One month prior to data collection, both individuals were sent a synopsis of the study and a letter requesting permission to use the community college as a research site and to interview college advisors, faculty members and administrators involved in the Developmental Education Program. In addition, I asked the Dean and the Director to recommend individuals whom I might interview. I invited their questions and concerns regarding the study.

With input from the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, four academic advisors, three faculty members and two administrators were selected for interviews using maximum variation sampling, a form of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1987). Purposeful sampling is designed to get "information-rich cases...from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central

importance to the purpose of the evaluation," as opposed to "gathering little information from a large, statistically significant sample" (Patton, 1987, p. 52). According to Patton (p. 53) maximum variation sampling is a type of purposeful sampling that describes "central themes...that cut across a great deal of participant...variation."

As a means of properly initiating my research study and in following standard research procedure at Michigan State University, an *Application for Approval of a Project Involving Human Subjects* was submitted to the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS).

*Participant Profiles*

The participants in this study comprised a broad representation of the community college. The demographics of the participants were as follows: Four of the nine participants were women, one participant was a person of color, three participants held doctorate degrees, one participant had a terminal degree in developmental education and all of the counselors were licensed counselors. The length of time participants had been at the college ranged between two and twenty-four years.

Seven initial interviews were conducted: Will Rann, Charles Nolen, Alyssa Martin, Jane Durfee, Matt Jefferson, Chris Jacobs, Nicholas Johnson. Two of the participants, Will Rann and Charles Nolen, were interviewed twice, the second set of interviews consisting of points of clarification from the first interview. After a preliminary review of all interview transcripts, it was determined that more information was warranted from different sources. Vice President Judith Turnbull and English faculty member Gina Pearson were subsequently interviewed. Protocol for Vice

President Turnbull and Ms. Pearson consisted of the semi-structured protocol used for the first set of interviews, but was infused with questions designed to more deeply probe some of the issues that arose with the original queries. Questions were posed to gain biographies of the participants, such as:

- What is your role at Mid-State Community College?
- How long have you worked here?
- Tell me about your educational background: Degrees earned? Institutions attended? When?
- How did you become involved working with developmental education students?

(See APPENDIX ONE for complete Interview Protocol.)

*Role of the researcher*

My study utilized qualitative research methodology. Janesick (1994) writes, "There is no value-free or bias-free design" in qualitative research—the researcher's values, biases and beliefs are evident in the written report. This candor is deemed appropriate and positive (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, as cited in Creswell, 1994, p. 147). In following this credo, it is important that the reader be cognizant of my biases, values and judgments and how I propose to regulate my beliefs and values in this study.

One of my responsibilities as the Director of the Academic Resource Center at a small midwestern liberal arts college was to supervise the academic advising program. In this role I saw firsthand the consequences that occurred when under-prepared students who, based on placement tests, were advised to enroll in developmental or preparatory courses and did not. These students oftentimes had difficulty in their courses, passing

their courses, staying off academic probation lists, and remaining in college. Part of the problem was that there was no institutional policy requiring them to enroll in the courses in which they placed—they were free to enroll in whatever courses they wished. Another element was that there was little continuity among the faculty who worked with under-prepared students: some faculty members referred these at-risk students to the Academic Resource Center for tutoring, help with study skills, reading, writing, etc., and others left it up to the discretion of the student whether to seek help or not.

My work with under-prepared students and with administrators, faculty and academic advisors who work with these students has created in me a strong ally to their needs and situations.

*Data Collection*

The study utilized a qualitative design incorporating interviews, document analysis, and participant observation as methods of data collection.

*Interviews.* Fontana & Frey (1994) posit that interviews provide "one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 361). A semi-structured interview format was used in accordance with Patton (1990), who writes, "When one is attempting to understand the holistic worldview of a group of people, it is not necessary to collect the same information from each person" (p. 286). A semi-structured interview is a combination, or intersection, between a structured interview, where the questions are identical for each respondent with virtually no variation, and an unstructured interview, where there is great flexibility and spontaneity in the questions.

An interview guide was used with identical questions for each respondent, but allowing for variance and flexibility in the probing questions, permitting the respondent to take the interview to places I might not have considered. Protocols were required for administrators, teachers, and advisors. Although the general form of these protocols was similar across the different roles, some of the questions were tailored to the particular role represented by the person interviewed. Community college academic advisors, faculty and administrators who work in a developmental education program on a selected community college in the Midwest were interviewed for this study.

From the literature, a preliminary interview protocol was created, designed to develop a better understanding of how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. This protocol was used in informal pilot interviews to get a "lay of the land" of academic advising within a community college and to ascertain the relevance of the interview protocol to my guiding questions. These pre-interviews also proved beneficial in testing the timing, construction and delivery of the interview questions. Based on these initial interviews and in consultation with my committee chairperson, a revised protocol was crafted for subsequent interviews with advisors and developmental education faculty.

Data for the study were collected between October 2002 and January 2003. The primary interest in this study was to understand how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. Thus, only these individuals were included in the study. Since I was not interested in narratives from faculty who count advising as but one of their roles and

responsibilities, faculty who advise or advisors at four-year colleges and universities were not included in the study.

Three weeks prior to data collection, each study participant received a letter explaining the research and requesting his or her permission to participate in the study. (See APPENDIX TWO and THREE.) Follow-up phone calls were placed to each individual within the next week to determine their interest in participating and to schedule an interview.

One individual recommended for the study did not respond to emails or telephone calls. This instructor was described by the chairperson of her department as "someone who was very knowledgeable and proficient" in working with developmental education students, and someone who "will add greatly" to my study. Another individual, an adjunct faculty member in the same department, was added in her place. No information was provided as to the instructor's rationale for not participating in the study.

The semi-structured interviews lasted approximately one hour each and took place in the participant's campus office. With the exception of the Director of the Developmental Education Program and the Director of Counseling and Advising, each individual was interviewed once. Emails were sent and phone calls were made when more data were needed. The interviews were audiotaped and the tapes were transcribed verbatim in order to provide exact commentary and inflections from the respondents for my analysis. The tapes were kept in a file cabinet in my office during data collection and analysis of the study. The tapes were destroyed upon completion of the study.

*Documents.* Document collection and analysis offers the researcher an easily accessible, rich and unobtrusive source of information (Merriam, 1988; Bogdan &

Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1994). Document collection consisted of materials from advisors and the advising center, institutional documents such as advising manuals and publications, copies of the college's advising policies and procedures, required advising forms, letters, emails, memos, and any other pertinent publications. The college's Web site was explored, paying close attention to the advising and developmental education links. A college's mission statement provides insight into the values that the institution deems important. This document was reviewed. Statistical information, as well as reports, college "Viewbooks," and other promotional materials can offer data that may benefit the study. These, too, were reviewed.

*Participant Observation.* Leedy (1997) explains that case study researchers spend many hours in the field with their research participants, "watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms" (Kirk & Miller, as cited in Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996). The goal of observations is to provide the researcher with firsthand information about participant behavior (Merriam, 1988; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1994). By observing and critically examining actual advising behaviors and procedures in comparison to stated behaviors garnered from interviews, the researcher begins to understand what is really occurring (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

To capture explicit behaviors and ways of doing things, I interacted with the participants in their settings: I attended Developmental Education Program committee meetings involving key players in a community college developmental education program. Participants were informed of the observations at least three days in advance. During the observations, I assumed a non-intrusive role and documented the events in my field notes. Thorough field notes were taken to chronicle my thoughts, perceptions and

experiences while conducting the study. Observations lasted for the duration of the meeting. Immediately after the observation, I spent ten to fifteen minutes with the participants discussing my perceptions of the observation as a means of substantiating them.

*Data Analysis*

Tesch writes that "The process of data analysis is *eclectic*; there is no "right way" (as cited in Creswell, 1994, p. 153.) The data analysis entailed coding and inductively analyzing the data as a means of identifying patterns and connections of meaning. Reflecting on Patton's (1980) words when he writes about the overwhelming feelings students experience when they begin to analyze their qualitative data, I endeavored to analyze and interpret my interviews concurrently with data collection and report writing (Creswell, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1984) recommend that data analysis be conducted on an ongoing basis in order to intentionally collect data of a higher quality with each interview. In keeping with these suggestions, my analysis of the data was continuous throughout the course of the study. Categories were developed from careful readings, comparisons and interpretations of the interview transcripts and other forms of data. The data collection was focused on the themes that emerged while more data were simultaneously collected.

Once the interview was concluded, it was important to record observations and explanatory notes as soon as possible in order to ensure that the data was useful and to reflect on the interview itself (Patton, 1990). Field notes were reviewed and tapes listened to as soon as possible after the interview, usually that afternoon or evening.

After receiving each interview transcript, I read it carefully and compared it with my typed fieldnotes. In the margins of the transcripts I noted ideas, themes, or questions that came to mind as I read. I made a list of the topics I identified, I clustered similar topics together and I crafted categories (Bogdan & Biklen 1992). I regularly returned to the transcripts, searching for sections of the text that fit my coding schema. I searched for quotes and examples to use in my report. I endeavored to constantly "stay close to the data" (Janesick, 1994, p. 215) as a means of reaching a "higher level of analysis" (Creswell, 1994, p. 154). Marshall & Rossman (1989) term this process data *reduction* and *interpretation* (p. 114) and Tesch calls it *de-contextualization* and *re-contextualization* (as cited in Creswell, 1984). "The final goal, "Tesch writes, "is the emergence of a larger, consolidate picture" (IBID, p. 154).

*Establishing Trustworthiness of the Data.* By establishing internal validity in my study, I can better present my findings as "common practice" across the field of academic advising, as they pertain to these particular settings. As a means of addressing concepts of internal validity, the following techniques were used. I *triangulated* the data by collecting information from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, institutional documents, advising documents and manuals. I looked for themes and patterns within and across these sources. I consulted the literature as a means of comparing my findings to other researchers' findings; I grounded my research in theory and used theory to help make sense of my data. My hope is that I "added to the running dialogue." I asked a fellow doctoral student to serve as a peer examiner and she reviewed my analysis for internal validity.

There were undoubtedly conflicting data in my study. The best way to present

this information is to acknowledge the disparities, and I did. I identified issues that I believed were missing from the data.

Janesick (1994) writes about the importance of cross-checking the researcher's work by allowing the respondents to examine the data in some way. This is called a "member check" (p. 216). She states that in writing the narrative the researcher must decide how s/he will conduct a member check. One possibility, according to Janesick, is to ask someone outside the study to review the data. Another possibility, Creswell (1994) writes, is to take the themes back to the respondents and verify that the researcher's analysis is correct. In this situation, I elected to have the data reviewed by an individual not affiliated with the study.

At the time of the interview, several of the respondents requested a copy of my findings, and I will provide them with one at the conclusion of my study. I believe that since they voluntarily agreed to answer my questions, and, as individuals who are directly involved with the issues in my research and have a vested interest in the study, a copy of my findings are appropriate and helpful to their work.

*Reporting the Findings.*

This study resulted in an in-depth, exploratory and descriptive case study of how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. Data collection and analysis were described appropriately so as to provide sufficient information regarding the methodologies inherent in the study.

Since, as Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest, describing qualitative research findings is most often done using a narrative text, the results of my study are presented here in rich, thick and descriptive narrative form. The finished report describes how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program.

# CHAPTER IV

## Organizational Context and Structure

*Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to understand how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program. This study utilized a qualitative method case study consisting of semi-structured interviews with community college faculty, administrators and counselors regarding how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program.

Eleven interviews were conducted with nine individuals between October 2002 and January 2003. Observations of committee meetings and advising sessions with developmental education students were conducted, as were analyses of institutional documents. A report of the results of the interviews, observations and document analysis as they pertain to the organizational context and structure, constitutes this section.

The study addressed the following questions:

1. Who are the key players in the process of academic advising for community college developmental education students?
2. What are the views of the key players regarding academic advising in a community college developmental education program?
3. What issues can be identified from the descriptions that are manifested in the differing views?
4. How are issues negotiated within the developmental education program?

This case study demonstrates that the structure and process of academic advising for community college developmental education students are shaped by differing and often competing interests of the key players involved in this process. Strategies used to address these differing interests among the key players reflect differing rationalities and different ways in which these groups use their power. In contrast to the dominant conceptions of academic advising as either developmental or prescriptive, these findings suggest that the nature of academic advising for developmental education is best regarded as inherently political.

The next three sections contain information gleaned from semi-structured interviews with community college faculty, administrators and counselors, document analysis, participant observations. The sections are divided into the following chapters: *Chapter IV—Organizational Context and Structure* is divided into five parts: Organizational Context, Community College Mission, Developmental Education, Support Services, and Academic Advising; *Chapter V—Key Players* presents group and individual profiles for the major personnel involved with the Developmental Education Program at Mid-State Community College; *Chapter VI—Themes and Issues* discusses the main topics inherent in the findings; and *Chapter VII—Discussion* connects the findings to theory, presents implications for the study and offers suggestions for further study.

*Organizational Context*

Semi-structured interviews with community college faculty, administrators and counselors, in conjunction with observations and document analysis were used to understand how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players

involved in a community college developmental education program.

The Mid-State Community College Board of Trustees has identified eight *Strategic Outcomes* to facilitate the management of institutional efforts. Written with a long-term perspective, these *Outcomes* represent most of the board's part of long-range planning. The Board defines *Strategic Outcomes* as mission-related policies, which specify which human needs are to be met, for whom, and at what cost. Among the eight *Strategic Outcomes* is Developmental Education.

*Community College's Mission*

Mid-State Community College's Mission as presented in institutional documents, the college's Web site and evidenced in interviews and observations reflects a strong emphasis on learning. The college's mission is "to provide the community with learning opportunities that enable people to achieve their goals." The *Community's College,* as the Vice president affectionately calls Mid-State, "...is a vibrant institution of higher education dedicated to enriching people's lives and contributing to the vitality of the community."

Mid-State's instructional goal, as described on the college's Web page "...is to foster active, responsible learning." This is promoted through the various programs and services offered at the college as well as faculty and staff who are committed to working with students and equipping them with the tools necessary to do their best—personally, socially, academically and vocationally.

Mid-State Community College is dedicated to its students and demonstrates this dedication with an *Assurance of Quality Pledge*, found on the college's Web site,

whereby:

- Students transferring to a baccalaureate granting institution with at least a 2.0 grade in the subject under question, will perform academically as well as their colleagues who enrolled as freshmen, or Mid-State will provide the course(s) necessary to acquire the skills at no cost to the student

- Students who have earned a certificate or degree from an occupational program at Mid-State may expect to be competent in a job if that work is what they were prepared for in their College curriculum. If an employer so deems that the worker is not adequately prepared, the College will provide additional training to the student at no cost to the employee or employer.

Additional descriptive information regarding Mid-State Community College is presented in Chapter III of this study.

*Developmental Education*

The Board of Trustees and the administration at Mid-State Community College hold developmental education in high regard—it is in fact one of their eight *Strategic Outcomes.* The *Strategic Outcomes* Policy on Developmental Education states that the college will prepare developmental education students for college and/or work by offering the students opportunities to reach their goals within their own learning styles.

The Developmental Education Program committee, as the guiding team for issues pertaining to developmental education at Mid-State Community College, is charged with improving services and drafting policies, such as identification of under-prepared students, testing, grading, prerequisites, et cetera. The committee is comprised of two administrators, two counselors, and six faculty members.

In responding to questions regarding processes when a student first enrolls at Mid-State, study participants stated that all newly admitted degree-seeking applicants must attend an academic planning session before they can select classes. Degree-seeking

students who are considered under-prepared must take a placement test and a computerized writing assessment tool. According to the college's annual progress report, produced by the Office of Institutional Research and presented to the Board of Trustees in September 2001, 35% of degree seeking students in 1999-2000 required placement testing. [3]

As a community college, Mid-State Community College has an open-door policy, meaning that all students are eligible to attend the college, regardless of academic ability. An open-door policy, however, allows students into the institution who might not be academically prepared to do college-level work. In order to best serve the student and maintain the integrity of the institution, certain entry requirements are standard procedure.

Students meeting certain criteria are required to take a placement test designed to identify skill deficiencies in writing, reading, computation, science, and study skills. These criteria are:

- an ACT composite score below 16 or no standardized test scores
- a high school grade point average below 2.0
- all home school students regardless of GPA or ACT scores
- international students
- students who have a GED.

At Mid-State Community College the placement test used is the "Accuplacer Test," which, as created by The College Board and teams of college faculty, assesses the

[3] Footnotes detailing citations will not be provided in order to maintain confidentiality.

student's skill levels and abilities in mathematics, English, reading and writing. The resultant scores are used to place students into the mathematics, English, reading and writing courses that are deemed most appropriate.

Students whose placement test scores fall below institutionally set levels are expected to take specific developmental education courses in Math and/or English, depending on what they need. Faculty trained in using creative teaching techniques to ensure student success teaches these courses. In addition, all faculty members at Mid-State Community College have access to training in working with students who have different learning styles.

Once the placement tests are completed they are graded immediately, and students learn whether or not they perform at college levels in mathematics, English, reading and writing. If the student has been identified as being under-prepared for college level work, or work that is typical for first-year regular classes, she is placed into the appropriate developmental courses and must meet with a counselor to create a schedule.

The developmental education program at Mid-State Community College is comprised of six courses:

- Math 001 – A review of math fundamentals
- English 001 – A review of language skills necessary for proficient writing
- English 002 – A continuation of English 001
- Reading 001 – A reading skills reinforcement class
- Reading 002 - A continuation of Reading 001
- Psychology 101 – Assists the student with adjustment to college.

Until the student successfully completes her developmental courses, a hold will be placed on her course enrollment card and she must register for courses with a counselor. Upon successful course completion the hold will be released and she can register independently of the Counseling Center, if she chooses to do so.

Students who have been identified as under-prepared and are enrolled in two or more developmental courses are automatically assigned to a section of Psychology 101—the college's student success course. Required enrollment in this course, however, is more of an unwritten policy and is difficult to mandate. Dr. Charles Nolen, Program Director of the Counseling Office and Counselor, reported that "[Ensuring that students enroll in Psychology 101] is not the most successful follow up piece."

Within many sections of English 001, there is another component called the *Student Victor Program*, which entails assigning a counselor to meet with students in class and be their mentor. One counselor meets with one-half of his assigned class every week to work on student-college connections, and periodically to work with the full class on advising and administration matters. Dr. Nolen provided a clear rationale of the *Student Victor Program:*

> ...it's that role model piece that's missing for the students. It gets students connected to each other. Students are in isolation typically, especially developmental education students. They sit there in their class thinking, "I'm the only one with these problems. No one else has the problems like I have." In reality, the person sitting next to them has similar problems.

*Support Services.* In addition to the courses created for under-prepared students, a review of institutional documents highlights numerous support services available for students at Mid-State Community College. Some services are mandatory for students in certain

federally-funded programs; for example, students in the Occupational Support Services Program, Disability Support Services Program or the Student Support Services Program are required to meet with their counselor at least twice a semester. Occasionally students with severe academic problems will be asked to sign a contract agreeing to meet with their counselor more often.

Counseling and advising services are provided by four different support service centers. All four centers are on the same floor of the Student Building. Although they are not necessarily interrelated, their proximity to each other makes it appear as though they are. Three of the four centers are housed within Academic Support Center Services: Occupational Support Services, Disability Support Services and Student Support Services Program (TRIO). The Occupational Support Services Program provides services to eligible students who are enrolled in any one or two-year occupational major. To be eligible students must be formally enrolled in an occupational program or have declared an intent to enroll and must meet one or more of the following conditions:

- Physically disadvantaged
- Economically disadvantaged
- Academically disadvantaged
- Enrolled in a non-traditional curriculum
- Single parent individual, pregnant woman or displaced homemaker
- Limited English proficiency
- Other barriers to educational achievement

Tutoring and computer labs are available free of charge, either in a group format, a lab format or individual tutoring to any Mid-State Community College student. There are many subject-centered tutorial/computer labs available to students on a walk-in basis. Professional and student tutors who work with students on their homework assignments and answer questions about class lectures or readings assigned in textbooks staff the labs.

A faculty recommendation for tutorial assistance is needed from the student's instructor before a tutor will be assigned.

The Disability Support Services Program provides academic support to students with disabilities, as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students must submit documentation verifying that they are eligible for disability support services. The Student Support Services Program (SSS or TRIO) is a federally funded program designed to help low income and first generation college students reach their educational goals. Students must be part of these programs in order to meet with counselors and receive services.

*Counseling Center.* There are three chief areas on campus where advising occurs: the Field House, in-class and the Counseling Center. Advising services at the Field House take place twice yearly—in late fall and late spring semesters—and are termed "Academic Advising Day." In-class group academic advising occurs sporadically throughout the semester in campus classrooms. The fourth center comprising Support Services—the Counseling Center, which is the focus of this study—is a separate unit and the main provider of academic advising to the majority of students at Mid-State Community College. Counselors in the Counseling Center refer to themselves as the "general counselors." There are seven counselors in the Counseling Center: four women and three men. All are licensed counselors, as are the counselors in the other centers on campus.

According to the Counseling Center's Web page, the mission of the Counseling Center is to provide academic advising and personal and career counseling to prospective and current Mid-State students. The Center's goal is to facilitate academic and personal

success to all Mid-State students through informed decision-making. To achieve this, counselors offer academic advising, both short term—designed to select courses for the following semester, and long term—clarifying values, identifying life and career goals and then choosing an academic major that corresponds with those goals, transfer planning, crisis intervention and referral, and personal counseling. Counselors also inform and help students understand college expectations and procedures, make referrals to college and community resources when needed and participate in the colleges' Academic Orientation and Registration Program. Services provided by counselors are confidential and free of charge.

The Counseling Center serves as the college's Research Center where students interested in transferring to a four-year institution can research academic programs. The Research Center holds college catalogs of all four-year and many two-year state colleges, provides applications for state colleges and has hardcopy and CD-ROM view books for many colleges and universities.

The Counseling Center sponsors many events designed to enhance the student experience at Mid-State Community College and to facilitate student success. These events include a Community Agency Fair, which introduces the college community to services and assistance available to them within and beyond the college, and the annual College and University Representatives Day, which provides students the opportunity to gather information about transfer schools.

The Counseling Center schedules workshops throughout the semester which are designed to help students strengthen the skills necessary for successful navigation through college. Workshop topics include note taking, listening, improving

concentration and memory, managing time, mastering the textbook, studying for exams, reducing test anxiety and setting goals.

There are also services available for students who need more specialized or personal help, including academic advising and personal counseling, free printed materials, advocacy, help completing financial aid forms and transfer applications, career exploration and referrals to other services, both on campus and off campus. Since all counselors are professionally trained and licensed they are cognizant of the various issues that college students face, such as juggling school with work and family obligations, uncertainties about their abilities to "do college," depression, substance abuse, career guidance, and other issues.

However, according to participants' responses, the majority of work done by counselors in the Counseling Center involves academic advising: assisting students with course selection, choosing and changing majors, transferring to four-year institutions, remaining in good academic standing at the college, et cetera This role of the Counseling Center—academic advising—is the context in which this study was couched.

# CHAPTER V

## Key Players

There are many different participants involved in academic advising for developmental education students on college campuses (Roueche & Snow, 1977; Maxwell, 1997). At Mid-State Community College, the group vested with the major responsibility for development education programs and services is the Development Education Program committee. But one committee alone cannot enact all programs and services. There is consensus among the participants in this study that advising and servicing developmental education students at Mid-State Community College is an institution-wide responsibility and not the purveyor of a single office or individual. There are many factions on campus that share this responsibility, including counselors, faculty, student support personnel and tutors.

Counselors prepare students for success—both in college and after college—and encourage students to consider and set goals for themselves. Faculty, through their teaching and interaction with students, help students implement their goals academically. Student support personnel and tutors provide auxiliary services to students that support the faculty and counselors' work with students. One group, working in isolation, cannot accomplish what a network of groups and individuals can.

Although Will Rann has been identified as the Coordinator of the Developmental Education Program at Mid-State Community College, participants in this study unanimously agreed that Mr. Rann does not work in a vacuum. When asked to name others involved in advising developmental education students at Mid-State Community

College, all responses included the Developmental Education Program committee, chaired by Will Rann and comprised of administrators, faculty members and counselors. Members of this committee include study participants Charles Nolen, Program Director of Counseling Center/Counselor; Matt Jefferson, Director of Student Victor Program and Counselor/counselor; Chris Jacobs, MTH Chairperson/MTH Faculty; and Gina Pearson, ENG Faculty. Non-study participants include Roberta Bright, Assistant Dean; Stanley Leon, MTH Faculty and MTH lab coordinator; Jim Fischer, ENG Department Chairperson; Brody Hocking, Bob Jackson, ENG Faculty; and Michael Sweeney, ENG Faculty.

In addition to the Developmental Education Program committee, faculty members, counselors, and student support personnel, there are others who have a stake in assisting under-prepared students. Charles Nolen, Program Director of Counseling Center/Counselor commented, "A lot of people have responsibilities for under-prepared students, they just may not realize it." In describing a new initiative at the college, Dr. Nolen provided examples of individuals who share in the responsibility for developmental education students when he said:

> We have a [program]...here. It's a streamlining process from getting that student from the street to a seat. There are a lot of people who play a role in that process, from the recruiter who goes out and makes neat programs and makes our college known to people, to people in Admissions...to people in counseling who help...orient and provide an overview of services to students...to faculty [who help register and advise]. A lot of people played a role in that. I don't know if they always know that they do.

Another participant, Counselor Jane Durfee, relayed an example that occurs early in the school year:

> People who work in facilities [and] the custodians have responsibilities for under-prepared students. The first day of the first week [of the school year]...we get volunteers from every department...there are student stations set up all over campus to help the new student, not just the developmental student, but any student. We have people stationed at those tents... [With] signs everywhere to...provide help to students who need it. And I think those people have responsibilities for developmental students too.

These comments offer support and credibility to Roueche & Snow (1977) and Maxwell's (1997) statements, which posit that there are many participants involved in truly effective community college developmental education programs. Among the participants at Mid-State Community College are counselors, faculty, administrators, personnel from other Student Services offices, and plant and grounds people. However, key players regarding academic advising for developmental education students are counselors, faculty and administrators, due to the level of involvement these individuals have with developmental education issues.

Depending on the background, training and experience of study participants, each had their views of what advising in a community college developmental education program should entail. Not surprisingly, the views were not dissimilar. Counselors saw their role as attending to the "whole student" and facilitating the student's growth and development in myriad ways: academically, socially, emotionally, mentally and intellectually. It also means sometimes doing nothing and letting the student make his own way. Faculty considered counselors' roles as "doing what it takes to help students." Administrators viewed advising as contributing to student retention and success.

Table 2 illustrates a list of study participants and their roles at the college.

**TABLE 2**

| NAME | ROLE |
|---|---|
| Judith Turnbull | Vice President |
| Will Rann | Developmental Education Program (DEP) Coordinator |
| Charles Nolen[4] | Program Director of Counseling Center/Counselor |
| Alyssa Martin | Counselor for Disabilities Support |
| Jane Durfee | Counselor |
| Matt Jefferson | Director of Student Victor Program/Counselor |
| Chris Jacobs | MTH Chairperson/MTH Faculty |
| Nicholas Johnson | MTH Faculty |
| Gina Pearson | ENG Faculty |

The ways in which the participants arrived in their roles as developmental educators were as varied as were their educational preparations. Their stories were all very engaging. Not one individual set out on their career path with the intention of becoming a developmental educator. For all individuals in this study, the ways in which they entered the field of developmental education was purely accidental.

*Administrators*

There were two administrators from Mid-State Community College interviewed for this study: Vice President Judith Turnbull and Developmental Education Program Coordinator Will Rann.

[4] Charles Nolen is grouped with counselors instead of administrators because his interview responses were more aligned with counselor's responses than with administrators' responses.

*Background.* Judith Turnbull is the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs at Mid-State Community College. She is responsible for all instruction and all academic deans report to her, including student affairs. Vice President Turnbull has been at Mid-State for twenty-seven years. She began her tenure at Mid-State as a faculty member in the technology department and remained in that role for eighteen years, eventually assuming the role of department chairperson.

Vice President Turnbull has an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree in industrial education, a master's degree in vocational education, an Educational Specialist degree and a Ph.D. in Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy.

Will Rann is the Developmental Education Program Coordinator at Mid-State. He earned a B.A. in, an M.A. in English Language and Literature, and an E.D.S. in Developmental Education from. Rann has worked at Mid-State for six years. Prior to his appointment as DEP Coordinator, Rann taught developmental and college level writing courses.

*Involvement with Developmental Education.* In her role as vice president, Judith Turnbull works with advising developmental education students indirectly—she does not teach or advise them but chairs the committee that represents the developmental education students' needs and requirements. Turnbull has the authority to accept or reject the Developmental Education Program committee's recommendations: "...about a third of our population [is in the Developmental Education Program], so it is something [with which] I have a lot of concern since I'm in charge of all instruction. We worry about the retention and success of those students...My involvement is more along the leadership of it."

Will Rann's entrée into working with developmental education students began in 1974 when, as the newest and youngest person in the English Department at a local four-year institution, he was assigned the added responsibility of teaching at-risk students. He realized that he really enjoyed it. Later in his career when he was job searching, the position that was available was in a Federal TRIO Program for at-risk students. He accepted the position and realized that, although he loved working with this population, his educational training had not prepared him to work with at-risk students. He discovered an institute that certifies developmental educators, and enrolled. "That was the smartest decision I ever made," he reported. "...it really solidified my understanding of myself as a developmental educator. They gave me the training and the background I needed to [work with developmental students] better."

*Involvement with Academic Advising.* Administrators view the role of advising as a link for students and the college—counselors are there to encourage academic success for students and to promote student retention for the institution. Counselors are trained to work with students in ways that foster positive habits and ways of doing things.

Vice President Judith Turnbull stated that students at community colleges have a number of needs outside of deficient academic skills. As Vice President Turnbull understood it there are two kinds of advising: academic advising which is skill-based, including helping the student select classes, and advising which addresses the extraneous variables that impact their learning, such as problems with childcare, transportation, finances or relationships. Both types of advising are intricately related and important to the student's ability to learn: "...All these other things are...impacting that [student's] learning...They can't concentrate...because they have a child at home that's sick and

[they are] wondering who is taking care of that child..."

She reminded that "Everyone learns differently and oftentimes schools [act] much like factories—we try to treat them all the same... [as though they] all have the same needs." What we *should* be asking, she suggested, is "What's the best way to get them from here to there?" Turnbull believed that this is what advising should entail—being able to identify students' skills and then placing them in the right situation to encourage skill development and experience the right level of instruction.

It is crucial, Developmental Education Program Coordinator Will Rann cautioned, for the counselor to have "a personal connection" with the students. "You've got to somehow help them see that the things they have to say are important, that somebody wants to hear them. You don't get very far with developmental students without a personal connection." He also stressed the importance of a "tough love" approach: "You [have to] be tough enough to hold them to improvement, but you will also be supportive enough that they can deal with things."

*Counselors*

Four counselors from Mid-State Community College were interviewed for this study: Charles Nolen, Program Director of Counseling Center/Counselor; Alyssa Martin, Counselor for Disabilities Support; Jane Durfee, Counselor; and Matt Jefferson, Director of Student Victor Program/Counselor.

*Background.* Dr. Charles Nolen, Program Director of the Counseling Center, has a Bachelor's degree in Restaurant and Hotel Management, an M.S. in Counseling and Educational Psychology and a Ph.D. in Workforce Education and Development. Dr.

Nolen has held the position of Program Director of Counseling Center/Counselor since the beginning of Fall Semester, 2002 and has been employed at the college since January 1991.

Alyssa Martin, Counselor for Disabilities Support, earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and an M.A. in Counseling. She has been employed at Mid-State Community College for two years.

Counselor Jane Durfee earned her Bachelor's degree in Business. She holds two Master's degrees—one in Educational Administration and one in Counseling. She has been at Mid-State for ten years. Prior to her employment at Mid-State, Durfee taught high school business courses, coached athletic teams, and was a school administrator. She returned to college to pursue a second Master's degree in counseling. She accepted the counselor position at Mid-State after graduation.

Matt Jefferson, Director of Student Victor Program/Counselor, has a B.A. in communication, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Counseling and Higher. Jefferson has been a counselor at Mid-State Community College for twelve years. Previously, Jefferson was Director of the Counseling Center and Coordinator of the Retention Program for DEP students at Mid-State. Jefferson has also worked on a bridge program for minority students pursuing math/science in order to attend to graduate school in bio-medical research.

*Involvement with Developmental Education.* Dr. Charles Nolen began working with developmental education students as an undergraduate when he was assigned to tutor students with learning disabilities. As a Master's degree student, Nolen's graduate assistantship was with one of the first programs in the nation to have a separate support

service for students with learning disabilities. In this appointment, Nolen supervised a caseload of students with learning disabilities, managing their learning needs and making sure they were connected with the services they required. After earning his M.A, Nolen worked as an academic counselor and later as a Learning Disability Specialist, eventually managing the Disability Support Office.

Counselor Alyssa Martin began working with under-prepared students by default: her original interest was students with disabilities. However, through her work at the college with differently abled students, approximately half are also under-prepared academically: "These students with whom I work are not just under-prepared students—they are under-prepared students who also happen to have a disability."

Counselor Jane Durfee became involved working with developmental education students as she counseled college athletes. Since Durfee was an athlete and had experience in coaching and working with students athletes, she was assigned to work with the student athletes when she began counseling at Mid-State. At the community college level, Durfee stated, many of the athletes are developmental education students. Student athletes remain the largest student population with whom she works.

Dr. Matt Jefferson, Director of Student Victor Program/Counselor, began working with developmental education students in his role as a counselor. He created a retention program for DE students—*Student Victor Program*—that provides counseling services to students in their classes. The program provides the affective side of student success. Jefferson's goal is to implement *Student Victor Program* across the campus.

*Involvement with Academic Advising.* Counselors, as practitioners, perceived their role as varied, wide-ranging and encompassing topics ranging from academic issues

such as choosing classes to personal issues covered in counseling sessions to preparing for life after college. Counselors tended to consider the "whole student," not just the student who was struggling in their math course, or who read at pre-college levels.

At times counselors find themselves representing both students and the institution, a role that can position the counselor in a conflicting mindset, as counselor Alyssa Martin remarked: "Sometimes my responsibility is to the student and sometimes it's to the institution. It's my responsibility to explain to them why they have to take a developmental class, what the implications of that are, that yes you get credit for these, however, these will not work towards transfer."

Dr. Charles Nolen, Program Director of Counseling Center, stated that:

> Advising to me means working with the whole student. There is a ...personal piece on it, there is an academic piece on it. You have to look at the whole picture [and] be able to explain it, be able to talk about it, be able to look at past behaviors and be able to help that student develop action plans on improving in areas. I think advising, particularly developmental advising, is really looking at the whole student [and helping them] set goals and target those areas that need to be addressed.

In order to be equipped with information to help the student the counselor must know and understand their student. Several counselors emphasized the importance of listening to the student to find out what their interests are. Dr. Nolen mentioned that he considered this skill of listening to the student the most important of all counselor skills.

Equally as important as listening to the students, counselors must *hear* their students. Alyssa Martin, counselor for Disability Support Services, remarked that in order "to help the student...you've got to somehow help them to see that the things they have to say are important, that somebody wants to hear them."

Sometimes, though, listening to and hearing students seem to be contradictory to students' wishes and desires. Information received from counselors may not be what the student wants to hear. Dr. Nolen noted that:

> Sometimes advising is telling a student they are not ready for this...not that they can't do it, but that they are not necessarily ready for it. [Advising is] giving them the information they need, not necessarily...that they want to hear.

Counselors saw their role as teaching "a class of one." Jane Durfee is one counselor who considered herself a "non-classroom faculty" member:

> We go into it teaching—we feel that we have some [information] ...that the student needs when they leave...we're trying to give them an idea on basic college. How does this work? What are credits? What's the difference between a credit hour and a contact hour?...[What is] a full-time student? How do you meet those categories for a degree? If you're a transfer student, what's the benefit of the MACRAO Agreement? How do you [navigate] through the system? That's what we have to teach them. We try to teach the ins and outs of college.

Counselors believed that it is a component of their job responsibilities to help students identify options that will help them realize their goals, whether that involves transferring to a four-year institution, experiencing an internship or changing their major course of study. According to Matt Jefferson, "Advising to me means answering the student's question: 'Here's my goal—how do I get there?' and through teaching...work on things that I know they are going to need for life." Dr. Nolen agreed with Mr. Jefferson when he said:

> Advising helps prepare the student for the next steps. [Our job is to help students] make informed decisions...we need to have them ask questions. Advising opens up the door to that student and says "these are the options that you have." Students sometimes just want to be told what to do. And you have to explain that you cannot just tell them what to do, because "what is right for me is not necessarily right for you."

Counselors also saw their role as demanding that students assume some of the responsibility for their advising. Counselors believed it was their responsibility to explain to under-prepared students why they had to take a developmental class, for which the student will get credit but will not count toward any degree program and will not transfer to another institution. Conversely, counselors also believed that students had a responsibility to the advising process. Alyssa Martin stated, "You can give them a boost to shed their mindset...you'll be tough enough to hold them to improvement, but you will also be supportive enough that they can deal with things."

As licensed counselors, counselors also provide personal counseling. Although the counseling program at Mid-State Community College is not organized to offer long-term counseling, some counselors have students with whom they have worked for a year or two while the students were attending Mid-State. Ms. Durfee communicated that she sees students for personal counseling once or twice a week, usually when it has reached a crisis point for the student. For approximately fifty percent of the students requesting personal counseling, she estimated, the problem began as an academic issue that boiled over into their life and became a personal counseling issue. In the majority of cases, however, students needing long-term counseling are referred to a therapist outside the college.

*Faculty*

Three faculty members from Mid-State Community College were interviewed for this study: Chris Jacobs, math chairperson/math faculty; Nicholas Johnson, math faculty; and Gina Pearson, English Faculty.

*Background.* Chris Jacobs, math chairperson/math faculty, holds a B.S. in Engineering/Physics & K-12 Certification, and two M.A.s—one in Educational Leadership and one in Math. Jacobs has been at Mid-State Community College for twenty-four years.

Math faculty member Nicholas Johnson's educational background includes a B.A. and M.A. in Education with a math emphasis. He has been teaching Math at Mid-State since 1982.

Gina Pearson earned a B.A. in history, with an English minor. She unsuccessfully tried to find employment as history teacher, then returned to college and earned another B.A. and eventually an M.A. in English. Pearson is in her 20th year of teaching at Mid-State Community College.

*Involvement with Developmental Education.* Math chairperson/math faculty member Chris Jacobs began his involvement in developmental education when he was working with the local K-12 Community Education Program. He was hired by Mid-State Community College to work as a tutor in the tutoring lab helping students with physics and mathematics assignments. He continued tutoring for ten years. As a new community college faculty member he saw there was a need for educational intervention regarding under-prepared students. He considered this part of his responsibility as a faculty member so he began teaching students in the Developmental Education Program. His interest and commitment to under-prepared students continues today.

Math faculty member Nicholas Johnson began working with students in developmental education programs when he was teaching middle school math and had several students who had trouble learning. It was at this time that Johnson's second grade

son was diagnosed as dyslexic. As a teacher and parent, Johnson decided he would learn what he could about at-risk students in an effort to help his students and his son. He joined a parent consortium group sponsored by a local college, whereby parents were trained to tutor another group member's child. Within five years, Johnson's son was in a gifted and talented program in his junior high school. This was all the proof and inspiration that Johnson needed to merge teaching with developmental education. This created a passion in him for students who were at risk and he continued in this venue. Johnson remains to this day a staunch supporter of developmental education.

English faculty member Gina Pearson began working with under-prepared students at Mid-State when, as a teacher in the local Community Education Program, she was chosen to be an English tutor at Mid-State. She realized that she enjoyed working with the students and the instructors. A few years later, after a brief teaching stint overseas, Pearson was assigned to teach three sections of college-level English. She currently teaches ENG 002 and commented, "I think I do my best teaching with those students for some reason. I don't know why...maybe it is just experience. I've been at it 20 years with them, if you count the tutoring."

*Involvement with Academic Advising.* Faculty envisioned the counselor role as generally "being there to help students." Chris Jacobs further defined this role when he noted that counselors are there to help students decide work, academic and career goals. Faculty member Nicholas Johnson had a different notion of counselor roles, as expressed through his comment that:

> Counselors make contacts for [students] and do advocacy regarding help with finances if they know [students] are going to be in trouble if they...drop this class—if it is going to affect their funding. Which [students] don't know on their own. [Counselors]...have the

> information in front of them that [students] would not go find on their own.

Some faculty members considered it important that the counselor know their students and are familiar with individual students' needs, learning styles, et cetera, and conversely, that students know who their counselors are, where their offices are located and what services they can expect from their counselor. It is imperative for counselors to make the effort to connect with students, as Nicholas Johnson established:

> ...[counselors need to] get to know the students on a personal level and so they are able to recommend instructors...if they know that someone would do better in a certain type of class...they'll contract to get them in certain classes. [Counselors] do a really good job helping the students succeed.

Faculty members also considered counselors responsible for encouraging students to become more accountable for themselves. According to faculty member Chris Jacobs the role of the counselor entails meeting with students, helping them formulate academic and work/career goals, and then encouraging and supporting them to go "to the next level" and achieve their goals.

However, Mr. Johnson cautioned, the counselor/counselor's role is to *facilitate* the student's growth, *not* to do things for the student.

> [Counselors] give and give and give of themselves, but they have their criteria the students have to meet, [for example] they can't just drop in to take a test, they have to make an appointment. [Students] are gradually learning the importance of those things, of thinking ahead...that somebody softly guides them through it the first time, but they don't just let them get by it.

The next section will present findings from the study in a section titled, *Themes and Issues*. Three major themes were extrapolated from the data: *Location* where advising

occurs; *Placement* issues consisting of mandatory placement and placement tests; and *Ways to Improve Advising*.

# CHAPTER VI

## The Process of Academic Advising

This chapter will focus on the process of academic advising as described by participants at Mid-State Community College and will demonstrate that academic advising for developmental education students at Mid-State Community College is a fundamentally contested process. Advising is characterized by several issues in which there is little agreement among the key players. Negotiation of these issues reflects the power relations and interests of the participating actors.

The major issues include location of academic advising, placement concerns, specifically placement tests and mandatory placement, and ways to improve academic advising.

### *The Process*

How is academic advising negotiated among the key players involved in a community college developmental education program? The findings from this study *substantiate* that academic advising at Mid-State Community College occurs in many different ways in many different locations. Key places where advising occurs include the Field House, in classrooms and in the Counseling Center. When advising occurs in traditional locations, such as the Counseling Center, there are few to no disagreements or discrepancies regarding provision of services or personnel responsible for advising. However, when advising occurs outside the traditional realm, conflict arises. At Mid-State, nontraditional and problematic locations were the Field House and in classrooms, in particular

developmental English reading and writing.

Also inherent in this study is that placement concerns, specifically regarding placement tests and mandatory placement constitute major areas of contention for study participants.

*Location*

Advising at Mid-State Community College occurs in many different ways and in many different locations. Places where advising takes place include the college's Field House, in classrooms, and the Counseling Center. Both faculty and advisors were vocal about their involvement and roles in these programs and most of the opinions expressed were negatively skewed. Faculty did not like being required to sign up for two hour shifts on Academic Advising Day and have no students appear, or not be able to register a student because they had no authority to change a developmental education program student's schedule. Advisors complained about the format of In-Class Advising being detrimental to academic advising's philosophy of individualized attention. They also felt that by taking advising into the classrooms and away from their "turf," their job was devalued and considered ineffective.

Each location will now be discussed in detail, explaining what kind of advising occurs and what controversies exist vis-à-vis each location.

*Fieldhouse.* About two years ago, Mid-State instituted an *Academic Advising Day* in spring and fall in which classes are cancelled and students are strongly encouraged to go to campus and meet with either a faculty member or an academic advisor to get academic advice and register for classes. According to Dr. Nolen, on

Academic Advising Day Mid-State's Field House is transformed from a basketball court to "a truly one-stop shop... [where] every department has their own table, counselors have tables, and students can go from place to place."

Last year the college held the event in a central location—the college's Field House—but prior to that, the faculty would sit in their offices and wait for students to arrive for help with class registration. Since Academic Advising Day was contractual, faculty were required to participate, even, as Chris Jacobs complained, "[not one student] would come in this building. No one would come on this floor." Faculty members were required to sign up for two-hour shifts, during which time faculty, like English instructor Gina Pearson, would "maybe see one person." Many faculty members did not consider Academic Advising Day successful.

In the Field House location faculty again sign up for two hour shifts and represent their various academic departments. The advising staff is available to help with scheduling questions and problems and all developmental education students must talk with either Developmental Education Program Coordinator Will Rann or Student Victor Program Director Matt Jefferson before they can enroll. Will Rann commented on this new format:

> [It's not very well] attended by students. We don't think that the cost to benefit ratio is good enough to continue it, but it is in the contract, so we have to do it for another year. But that will probably be phased out, because it is costly in terms of time, in terms of money, in terms of person power and we don't get the number of registrations to make it a good investment.

English faculty member Gina Pearson had a different perspective on the day:

> Some of [the developmental education students] didn't get scheduled until Academic Advising day. Academic Advising day was horrible. There were two people, Will Rann and Matt Jefferson who were able

> to program students on that day and they had a huge line of students who needed to...get one-on-one [attention]. They get one-on-one attention for maybe 5 minutes or 10 minutes or whatever, however long it takes them to punch it in. But there is no real discourse or opportunity to talk and I think they need that.

Counseling Office Program Director Charles Nolen had an even different slant on Academic Advising Day:

> In the past I would say [students were not] attending the advising day. It was pretty much an opportunity to sleep or take the day off. This past winter in April, was probably the first time in a long time that the campus had come together in one location and really had their signups for class. Faculty had to volunteer for their shift...And there was a lot of promotion and marketing of that event. It was really successful. Students turned out in droves for that. So that was good. And we have record enrollment for this fall semester and I don't know if that's had any part to play or not, but certainly that had to have been a piece of getting the continuing students to think about the fall and to think about what they were going to do.

Some members of the Developmental Education Program committee cited feelings of powerlessness associated with Academic Advising Day. Before students in the developmental program can register for classes, they are required to meet with a counselor for his/her signature, which allows the student to register for classes. This procedure provides a system of checks and balances and assures that the student will not advance into higher-level courses before s/he is ready. However, as Gina Pearson explained, this practice becomes problematic when only the Developmental Education Program Coordinator and the Director of the Student Victor Program have the authority to register students and their lines are thirty-plus students deep, with waits of an hour or more not being uncommon, whereas lines of students in front of academic departments are curiously empty. Pearson derided the procedure: "Only Will and Matt have that authority. And, of course, they don't want to give that authority up because they see that

as a lessening of their rights."

*In-Class.* Two years ago, Will Rann and Matt Jefferson created a pilot program for advising developmental education students called *In-Class Advising*. The goal of the program was to facilitate responsibility in developmental education students. The objective was to get students registered for the next semester's classes. Matt Jefferson described In-Class Advising as "a very, very controversial thing."

The format of the program entailed two counselors, Rann and Jefferson, attending developmental English reading and writing classes for one-hour class periods. The advisors took course catalogues and schedule books with them and essentially taught students how to locate classes in the schedule book and create a schedule. Students were also advised as to appropriate courses to take based on their academic program, and at the end of that hour, if they had completed the process, the advisors returned to their office, entered the schedule into the computer and the student was registered.

Rann and Jefferson considered this program beneficial to all groups involved with developmental education students. The advisors saw it as valuable for faculty because "[it] makes that classroom faculty member aware of the services that we perform and the work that we do and how important it is."

Rann and Jefferson also considered the program time efficient, although some classroom faculty members weren't supportive of the program. Faculty complained that the new advising program took time away from class instruction time. "But it was time well spent," maintained Charles Nolen, "because it was helping the students." Matt Jefferson's perception was that after he worked with a class, student learning went much faster so the learning time is recouped and students are equipped to learn even better.

Rann and Jefferson also considered In-Class Advising a good orientation tool for adjunct faculty members:

> [In-Class Advising] helps adjuncts be integrated into the college. In the first place, they meet two advisors. It has been real good for the adjuncts because it integrates them into the work of the college. Usually they are out there not involved...but [with In-Class Advising] the teacher stays in the room and helps. 'Cause you can help them read a catalog. You can help them find their program of study. You may not be able to answer all the specific questions that they have, but you can answer a lot of the simple ones and with developmental education students a lot of them are simple.

The program was helpful to students because the advisors were able to "take [advising] to [the students] so that they are not always having to come to us." Jefferson continued, "Students have a fear of going to counseling offices. [This is why] In-class advising [is a good idea.]...it helps reacquaint [and] re-orient students with services of the Counseling Center. It takes away that fear factor."

Another benefit of In-Class Advising, according to Will Rann was that it encouraged students to be an active participant in their learning. Rann told about students, anecdotally referred to as having "empty vessel syndrome," who showed up for In-Class Advising without preparing or thinking about what classes to take. A typical response from the student was "I'm going to see my advisor and s/he will tell me what I need to take. I don't need to do this [In-Class Advising]." The advisor then encouraged the student to use the time provided by In-Class Advising to prepare for the meeting with the student's advisor.

Will Rann compared the current model of advising at Mid-State to previous models which he called a system "that encouraged passivity on the part of students." In the past students simply did not go to the counselors. It was hard to get an appointment with an advisor and it took time. So students advised themselves, oftentimes with input

from peers. "Students who needed an advisor tended to give it all over to the advisor and we have had some advisors who will do it for them." But this new model of advising urged advisors to perceive advising as a developmental process. "With In-Class Advising," Rann stated, "at least students are beginning to ask questions and engage the material."

In-Class Advising encouraged students to work on advising and registration issues so that when they met with their advisor it could be a more productive and in-depth session "because they will have sorted through some things on their own."

Finally, In-Class Advising was good for the advisors. Will Rann said it best:

> The counselors start understanding the difficulties of working with a group of [Developmental Education Program] students. When they see them one on one, some counselors will just talk **at** them and assume that they've been heard and understood. If the student actually has to produce something like a schedule from the information and then [the advisor] realizes they can't, they start realizing what it is like to work with students and actually have to have them have an outcome.

As proactive as the In-Class Advising Program was purported to be, it was not as successful as the developers had intended. Developmental education faculty and advisors alike were verbal in their disapproval of the program. Will Rann was very vocal in describing his experiences with the program:

> [We] got so many angry emails, so much frustration. Counselors did not like the counseling advising operation leaving their turf. They are very upset about that... English teachers, on the other hand were furious because that would take class time and they could not give up class time for something that students should be able to do on their own... There was a lot of disagreement...Everybody was angry that from this English side of it the classroom was being invaded by people who weren't doing English on their class time; from the counselors point of view, their job was being usurped, defined, modified and weakened by the [fact that] these English people wanted [students] in the English classrooms. So we got just a lot of anger and frustration.

One issue for advisors concerned advising people in a group that large: "We need to work with people one on one." In reality, as Jefferson explained, "...there are 16 advisors if you count the 'special pops.' We have 12,000 students. So, the ratio just doesn't work out." By eliminating special populations advisors from this number, there are eight advisors for the entire student body of Mid-State. "So we brought the advisors into the classroom." By implementing the In-Class Advising program, each of the advisors in the classroom worked with five or six students per session. Jefferson realized that:

> ...it is not [an] ideal [situation]...it is not like sitting down with a student one-on-one—you don't get a long-term education plan. You don't deal with issues, but you do catch enough issues...one of the good results is that we get appointments made to work with the counselor on other things. We start to identify what some of the issues are beyond selecting classes, career planning, making decisions, that kind of thing.

Will Rann admitted that results were obtained when a counselor could work one-on-one with a student: "When you connect [with a student], when they know you care, they know you like them and they know that you respect them. Then they will work. But if they don't think that, they are not going to work."

Advisors also expressed concern that In-Class Advising "doesn't get anybody in the math classes...there are a lot of people who take just math that don't take anything else. Math is run in a lab setting, so it is harder to do it with math. They aren't in separate classes."

Faculty member Gina Pearson was particularly outspoken about her disdain for the program. In part, she disliked relinquishing part of her instructional time:

> I have trouble getting everything covered in my seven classes academically, let alone fitting in eight hours of counselors when I am teaching a class...I don't think [my class] should turn into a counseling

> class or a personal inventory of themselves class. It is a class that prepares them for [the next departmental course]...So there is kind of a philosophical difference between me and some of the other people in the program who believe it should be that and we should have counselors in the classroom teaching every week and advising as part of that class.

Her rationale for not liking the program was that the counselors were "instructing [students] in small groups about decision making and 'how to do' the catalogue" and "working with personal problems of the student"—things that, although important to students' academic success, the counselors should be doing in one-on-one advising sessions in the Counseling Center, not in classrooms.

Even with strong resistance from some faculty members and advisors, Rann and Jefferson persisted. "We got the department chair's consent finally and we persevered. I think this must be our second year [and we've] had no angry emails and probably I'm getting a two-thirds positive response rate," mostly, according to Rann, from adjunct faculty:

> Not from my full time people. We have two full-time English people and one full time reading person. Only the department chair, who is one of the full-time English people, will do it. The other two will not. So all the other [positive] responses are adjunct.

Rann added that some of the full-time faculty "won't touch it" and "it doesn't get every adjunct." Still, Rann and Jefferson realize that In-Class Advising will never be a mandatory program: "We will never be able to say to a faculty person that you must have in-class advising. That would be contractually impossible." But, for most of the faculty who have included In-Class Advising in their curriculum, they "liked it and they've seen the benefit to their students." And, on a positive note, Jefferson added, "Everybody who has done it is repeating."

The program is still considered a pilot program in that no decision has been made whether to implement the program throughout the institution or to cancel it. Rann and Jefferson believe that the program will garner "increasing buy-in from counselors...Our adjuncts, for the most part, are coming along, but the counselors have been resistant." Rann reminded himself that it would take time for others to join.

*Counseling Center.* The Counseling Center at Mid-State Community College is the main location where academic advising occurs and, as the traditional site for advising, it is relatively uncontested. This is the terrain of the counselors. Students may schedule appointments to talk with their counselors about numerous issues including academics, personal matters, assisting students with course selection, choosing and changing majors, transferring to four-year institutions and remaining in good academic standing at the college. These are typically the kinds of things that occur in counseling centers on college campuses. Mid-State is no different than other colleges in this respect.

There are two physical parts to the Counseling Center: a large cafeteria-size room where students wait to see a counselor and a smaller lobby where counselors have individual offices around the perimeter. On this day, approximately twenty students are sitting in the outer lobby, talking to others, reading or listening to their headphones. Periodically, an individual comes from the inner lobby, calls a name, and a student rises from his/her chair and follows the announcer into the inner room.

Upon first entering the inner Counseling Center one notices a long reception counter along the left side. Two students staff the counter, managing counseling appointments and offering help. Around the perimeter of the room are the counselors' offices, situated in such a way that a very large empty space is left in the middle of the

room. Four counselors appear to be milling around the Counseling Center, not meeting with students. One of the counselors, Dr. Charles Nolen, is walking around talking informally with students who are in the office. Another counselor, Matt Jefferson, enters his office and partially shuts the door. He opens the door approximately ten minutes later to meet with a student. Counselor Jane Durfee takes a student into her office. She smiles at me and says "hi" on her way by.

*An Advising Session.* Counselor Hollis Carson accompanies a male student, Dayton Trent, into her office and introduces him to me. Dayton mentions that he wants to transfer next year and needs to register for classes for next semester. Hollis and Dayton are sitting about three feet apart. They chat for a few minutes, then Dayton tells Hollis that he wants to be a teacher. Hollis moves to the round table next to Dayton, after asking me to move over. She faces corner with her chair and body but shoulders and head are turned toward the student. Dayton is enrolled this semester in two Developmental Education Program courses, but dropped one—Math 001—because it was too much work. Hollis does not respond but asks Dayton if he has used a course catalog before. He responds that he has not. She asks him to look up a course— Math 001. He says that he does not know how to, so she helps him and explains it as he goes.

Hollis asks Dayton if he remembers what the MACRAO is. "No." She wonders if he attended Orientation. "Yes." "Do you know what an acronym is?" He does not. "You need to know so you can teach your students," she responds and then explains an acronym to him.

Hollis asks Dayton if he wants to take his jacket off: "My mother would say 'I'm hot—take off your jacket,'" Hollis tells Dayton. And he does. But he leaves his

ski cap on.

Hollis talks to Dayton about the courses he has this semester and how he is doing in them. They talk about courses he needs to take and Hollis asks him to find some of them in the course catalog. It is unclear whether Dayton understands this activity. He stares at the catalog and says "Ok" or "Uh-huh." I wonder if he is getting more information than he can handle. There is a blank look on Dayton's face and a faint, but noticeable smell of marijuana on his clothes.

After a few minutes, Hollis says, "I've been doing a lot of talking. Do you have any questions?" He says he does not. She has him register himself by writing everything down on his registration card so when the hold on his record is removed he will know how to do it. Hollis tells him "Next semester, come see me sooner. This is late—lots of classes are already gone." Dayton mumbles "Ok."

Hollis makes a phone call to see if any classes are still available. She questions Dayton, "What will you do to find out if a class you want is available?" She tells him to use the catalog as a resource. During the call she asks him how he is doing. He responds that he has found two more classes on his own. He keeps thumbing through catalog. She is on the phone for over seven minutes during which time Dayton and I are sitting and waiting.

After her phone call, Hollis looks over Dayton's schedule and notices that he seemed to take any class that was open—it appears that he did not consider the course description in including a course on his schedule: if the course fit what he needs (a social science course, for example) and it is open, he says "I'll take it."

They conclude the session, which lasts forty-five minutes. Dayton has thirteen

credits for next semester.

*Hollis Speaks.* After Dayton leaves, Hollis begins talking to me:

> This is "Drop-ins" at the college, which means students are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. Each student is supposed to get 15 minutes with a counselor. We're supposed to meet with students for 10 minutes. Can you imagine doing this in 10 minutes and having the student go away with an understanding of the process? I have a hard time cutting students off. They come for specific purpose and I feel like we owe it to them to help them. If we had signs that said "Only 15 minutes per student," that would be different. But we don't.

In this advising session, Hollis infuses a strong educative, developmental component to her advising style.

*Placement*

There are disagreements in the developmental education program at Mid-State Community College, specifically regarding placement tests and mandatory placement. Institutional policies seem vague concerning who should take the placement test. Should minimum cut-off scores be raised? Should there be mandatory course placement? Is the policy of counselors overriding course placements institutionally sanctioned? What constitutes successful completion of developmental courses? Are there alternative ways to complete Developmental Education Program requirements such as labs or review sessions? and similar questions. The following section will present a discussion of some of these issues.

*Placement Testing.* At a recent meeting of the Developmental Education Program the issue of minimum acceptable scores for placement testing was discussed. Chris Jacobs wondered if all or at least more students needed to be tested in order to promote

more success for students in next tier courses. Gina Pearson asked if the college needed to test more students if students are successful now: "Should we find out how they're doing before we raise the scores?"

Currently, the college requires students who have a score below 16 on the ACT to take the Accuplacer. However, the College Board, creator of Accuplacer, recommended a cut-off score of 21 for Mid-State. To increase the scores would result in many more students being tested, and most likely placed in developmental education courses.

This introduces another new problem: course section management. If Mid-State tests more students, more classes and/or sections will be needed. However, as Vice President Judith Turnbull stated, "There's a need to streamline the process of adding more classes." If Mid-State were to place more students in DE classes, the college would need to have the classes to back it up. Chris Jacobs mentioned that currently the college has 170 fewer course sections than it did 10 years ago with the same numbers of students enrolled. The extra courses a decade ago just about killed them financially. Charles Nolen suggested an idea to offer classes later in the day with the caveat that the classes must consistently be offered: "If students change work schedules, they must be assured that the classes they need will continue to be offered at the time they originally planned." Later afternoon classes would also help the #1 campus problem, which is parking, Nolen added.

Math faculty member Nicholas Johnson wondered if students could retake the placement test and proceed to the subsequent course:

> We have no policies stating how often [students] can take the placement test and at what intervals. Can you take the placement test halfway through your semester...[and] place into the next level and then be done with [that course]? No one has addressed those issues.

*Mandatory Placement.* A resultant problem arose when students who were given the placement test at the beginning of the semester, were placed in a class, and then, based on additional information from transcripts or an academic department retesting, were placed in another class. Advisors and faculty both expressed frustration with this policy because they felt their expertise was being questioned and usurped. They perceived this procedure as administrative and one in which their power as advisor or faculty member was stripped away.

Most people interviewed mentioned this problem of students "testing" into a specific course but not being required to enroll in that course, and in fact, many times, being able to circumvent their way out of taking the course. Typically, students who are considered under-prepared receive a postcard from the college instructing them to call the testing center to set up an appointment to take the placement test. Immediately upon completing the test they are given the test scores, but must wait a minimum of two weeks to see a counselor and receive an interpretation of the scores. This lapse of time is due to counselor schedules. At the appointment, the counselor interprets their scores for them, tells them what classes they need to take and enrolls them into those classes. However, counselors can over-ride the test scores if they think that they are inaccurate for some reason. Counselor Jane Durfee commented:

> Placement is mandatory in English except, as counselors, we do have access to more material: high school transcripts, information from the high school, things like that, which may allow us to override the recommendation for placement. So, it's a very gray [area].

As part of the Accuplacer placement test given to new students at Mid-State, counselors are privy to students' writing samples. Some of Mid-State's counselors have gone through training to proficiently assess the writing sample.

Not infrequently, counselors will consider an individual's writing placement scores with less significance than other factors, such as high school GPA, SAT or ACT scores, and/or previous grades in writing courses. In responding to possible motives behind this practice of ignoring placement scores when enrolling students into classes, counselor Jane Durfee proffered that "Some of our people feel confident enough to do a reading sample [and change the student's placement]. Some of their backgrounds are in language arts. I tend to follow the placement...I don't feel confident in myself enough to sit and do a reading sample [like] some of our people."

Many people on campus believe that there should be mandatory placement and there are others who believe that some flexibility with placement is warranted. Alyssa Martin, counselor for Disabilities Support, offered, "We muddle around and I would say the vast majority of the students end up with mandatory placement."

> It's not a very good system. We don't have any systematic way to [place students]. We don't have a list of weighted reasons that might want to ignore the test scores and place the student higher than their test scores indicated. Typically we don't send students immediately back to re-test. That would be a much better procedure. We just have the counselor guess at it. Sometimes that's good. Counselors can have really good instincts about that sort of thing, but sometimes there are...counselors who are more likely to ignore the test scores than others. There are no standardized procedures [for placing students in courses].

The issue of mandatory placement seems to divide counselors and faculty into several camps: some counselors believe they can accurately assess a student's transcript well enough to by-pass placement test results and change students' course placement. Others do not feel confident enough in their knowledge of math or language arts to make such changes.

Ms. Martin explained that:

> The faculty is kind of "split"...the language arts faculty feels that [there] should be mandatory placement and the math faculty are looking for some recommendations...they're willing to sit down with...a student and say, "Okay well, let's see where you're at." Maybe even give 'em their own test and say we'll give [you another chance] if you feel you've been placed wrong.

Some faculty, namely in language arts, are involved in assessing placement tests and do not think advisors have the "proficiency" to undermine the faculty's expertise. Language arts faculty attempt to use power to enforce their placements: they introduce the topic in committee meetings, as when English instructor Gina Pearson communicated at a Developmental Education Program committee meeting, "There's no policy in place for mandatory placement here at Mid-State, even though studies show that programs with mandatory placement have more successful student statistics." Pearson continued: "Mandatory placement should be insisted upon...If the student tests into a developmental class, the counselor shouldn't be allowed to say 'You don't need to take this.'"

Math faculty, conversely, are more lax regarding mandatory placement in that since they are not test proctors, they are not as invested in the test as are the language arts faculty. Also, if they disagree with a placement, math faculty will make their own placement changes.

This is problematic for faculty involved with the developmental education program at Mid-State. Faculty member, Chris Jacobs, expressed his frustration with this practice when he said:

> Students who [are under-prepared and] want to take business and technical English as part of their occupational program can circumvent the [developmental] English courses...I've never really understood the logic...If your skills are not good enough to go into college writing, why would it be good enough to go into business and technical English?

Several faculty members mentioned that they do not like this practice of changing a student's course placement based on what they see as arbitrary reasoning. Unfortunately, they do not know if the student is in their class because the student placed in it or because the counselor changed the course. They know if the student is not appropriately enrolled in the right class and cannot do the work, but they do not know how that happened.

Recently, the Developmental Education Program committee discussed the issue of counselors overriding course placement at Mid-State. Several committee members thought there was no policy in place for mandatory placement, even though, as Gina Pearson pointed out, studies show that programs with mandatory placement have more successful student statistics.

> As Will Rann and Charles Nolen understand it, one of the problems with course placement for under-prepared students is that many come to registration late, sometimes even after the semester has begun. Consequently there are few-to-no classes available. This is problematic in that the counselor must scramble to find something for the student to take, even non-developmental courses. Then, if the semester has begun, the student, who is already under-prepared, now is even more behind.

Of course, many unanswered questions and problems accompany such a dilemma:

- If all developmental education classes are full several days or weeks before the next semester begins, when should classes be added?
- How many people have been lost in the meantime?
- We don't have any policies for adding developmental education classes
- We only have developmental education classes. What else should we have?

## Ways to Improve Academic Advising

Most participants at some point during their interviews expressed frustration with the status quo of developmental education and advising at Mid-State. One of the interview questions asked, "What changes should be made to advising regarding the Developmental Education Program at Mid-State?" Some of the problems in the program were attributed to the ways in which information was communicated. Other problems centered on the role of faculty in advising and program centralization. These themes will be further explored in this section.

*Communication.* With the centers and offices that are integral to Mid-State's Developmental Education Program scattered around campus, and people who do not like to attend meetings, as Will Rann mentioned, it is not surprising that communication would be a problem. Several participants mentioned an institution-wide problem with communication, from getting timely and accurate information from the college to its students and the community at large, from counselors to faculty members including adjuncts, and information transfer necessary for program evaluation. Rann described Mid-State as a college where a lack of communication is typical: "The counselors don't talk to the classroom faculty—you need major regular communication and we have people who can't stand to go to meetings. They probably hate meetings as much as they hate the thought of a centralized department."

This problem, in part, stems from a time a few years ago when the administration was faced with hiring a new president. The college was in transition, there were many retirements college-wide, and patterns of behavior born out of that uncertain time were hard to break. Developmental Education Program Coordinator Will Rann proffered:

> We have a history—when I came here we got rid of our president and for two or three years no one did anything other than the absolute minimum assigned contractual duties. In fact, they worked without a contract for several years. And there is just a sense that you don't do what is not in the contract. [You don't go to] excessive meetings...they don't see that as their job, they are classroom faculty...they'll go to a few [meetings].

Counselor Jane Durfee provided additional information:

> We've had probably over 50 percent turnover in our office since I started. People that were ready to [retire]...didn't establish a relationship with the developmental faculty...[they] probably didn't leave the office very often...they were here, [they said] "yeah, I have appointments. I'll see my appointments, but I'm not gonna go to the classroom and do advising."

The Counseling Office was not the only unit on campus to experience a mass exodus of its personnel. Ms. Durfee disclosed that many faculty members also retired at this time, further alienating faculty and staff and contributing to indifference regarding developmental education:

> I bet our faculty's changed over 50 percent, too, the last five or six years. It's happened and we've had a lot of retirements. You had an older set of faculty...some people [were] leaving and they were being replaced with new people who are coming in, trying to find their way and developmental education does play quite a role... we're all new and nothing is really established that you have to do it this way.

Another concern frequently cited was the need for better explanation of the Developmental Education Program, including a brief written piece to be disseminated to students that communicates program goals and objectives. Study participants believed that such an institutionally sanctioned document would send a clear and consistent message that "This is the official policy for developmental education at Mid-State Community College." Anyone—students, faculty, counselors, administrators, et cetera—could refer to the document and all would get the same information.

Study participants considered the publication of this document important because students will often throw things away or overlook stuff. By distributing the document, Dr. Nolen posited that "at least you can say you presented that information."

Lack of regular communication with students is another problem the college faces. Rann related that this lack of communication has made "everyone angry." According to Rann, the registrar was angry because students in the Developmental Education Program could not register for classes without permission from an advisor. This caused students to become frustrated and complain to the registrar, who became annoyed because the advisors were not communicating regularly with him. "One reason we aren't communicating with him," Rann conveyed, "is that we don't know *what* to communicate, because the policies aren't clear."

Adjunct math instructor, Nicholas Johnson, mentioned the problem with communication as it related to adjunct faculty. Johnson decried the fact that adjunct faculty are left on the periphery regarding meetings specifically focusing on developmental education topics. He felt largely unsupported and on his own to learn about under-prepared student needs and college policies that pertain to them. He would like to see training be offered for all who work with students in the developmental education program, but especially for adjunct faculty who might be new college instructors, or who, as part-time employees, need mentors or human connections at the college.

Last year, Johnson attended the state developmental education conference and met Will Rann, Mid-State's Developmental Education Program Coordinator. Even though Johnson had taught at Mid-State for twenty years and Will Rann had been there

for six years in both faculty and administrative roles, their paths had not crossed. In the interim, Johnson has "gotten on [Rann's] contact list." He expressed his excitement about the resource that exists on campus, the Developmental Education Program, and the fact that faculty members, and especially adjunct faculty, are not alone in promoting developmental education at Mid-State.

Will Rann does not agree with Nicholas Johnson's sentiment regarding lack of support for adjuncts. Rann asserted that he has been working "a lot" with adjuncts: he arranged professional development seminars for adjuncts and he has sent weekly or bi-weekly emails and/or articles on developmental education and other areas of interest to adjuncts to encourage them to think of themselves as developmental educators.

Another concern involving communication involved program evaluation. Will Rann and Gina Pearson both cited program evaluation and subsequent reporting as problematic at Mid-State. In fact, Rann debated whether to call it "evaluation" or if simply "data collection" was a better term. Both individuals expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the evaluation done by Mid-State's Office of Institutional Research (OIR). Rann felt that there had been no communication from OIR. He shared that the college had projects involving developmental students whereby progress reports were required. OIR collected data on these projects and never reported their work to the Developmental Education Program or any of its members. Also bothersome to Rann was that Institutional Research did not request any information from the Developmental Education Program regarding the developmental education program at Mid-State. Rann and other members of the Developmental Education Program alleged that Institutional Research was creating a report based on questionably collected and misanalyzed

information. According to Rann there had been no communication between the Institutional Research personnel and the people working with developmental students, even though reports were being generated and distributed about the Developmental Education Program.

*The Role of Faculty in Advising.* Participants interviewed for this study were divided in their attitudes regarding faculty advising, from advocating faculty members as advisors to admonishing faculty members as advisors. Will Rann was strongly in favor of faculty advising, nurturing and mentoring. He cited the literature when he remarked that "mentoring of whatever kind is an effective retention strategy." He did not stop at faculty mentoring but also expressed a need for more human connections for Developmental Education Program students, including peer mentoring and more counselors. The caveat to his requests is that more personnel naturally requires more money. "We probably need money to pay faculty to [advise]. Not gobs of money, but it takes some...a lot of good developmental practice is not particularly more expensive than bad developmental practice. You just have to [have] people [who] will want to do it."

Counselor Jane Durfee would like to see more faculty advise but realized that faculty "...just don't have time." To use faculty members as advisors would benefit Mid-State since, as Ms. Durfee mentioned, "...we have 12,000 students and there are only about 20 of us overall in three different offices...we really need to work [faculty advising] in somehow." But "working it in" is problematic, according to Durfee, because at a community college, especially one that deals with a lot of transfer plans such as Mid-State, faculty members really don't have time to know the particular transfer requirements that each institution maintains. In lieu of employing faculty as advisors,

Matt Jefferson suggested that it is important to consider advising and teaching as complementary to each other and to know that they are there to support each other.

On the opposite end of the continuum from Will Rann and his preference for using faculty as advisors is Gina Pearson and her opinion that faculty do not belong in advising. A faculty member's role, Ms. Pearson stressed, is to teach. Occasionally that means offering a student advice about courses or career options in one's field. But faculty members are not trained in dealing with various issues that invariably arise with students and should not be required to do so, especially if there is no remuneration for it:

> I kind of resent the idea that we should turn into advisors and then not be paid for it, if we are going to take on somebody else's responsibility and it is just going to become part of our job.

Pearson is passionate about her belief that faculty should not advise:

> [Advising] is problematic. I don't mind advising students about English...I tell every student individually, "This is your skill in English right now, and this is the next English class I think you should take for success." I do that consistently one-on-one. But in terms of filling out their whole schedule and telling them, "This is what you need next, this is what you need to take two semesters from now," no, I don't see that as something I should take class time to do.

Faculty members felt that there was pressure on them to advise. Although they realize that developmental education students need extra attention and intervention, the consensus is that a trained counselor is the appropriate one to work with them. Gina Pearson said that she was always willing to advise students for their next English class, but disclosed that she does not feel adequately trained to counsel them in social or personal issues that interfere with their academic success:

> I do a lot of advising and personal counseling. [Students] want to talk to you, but I'm not a professional counselor and if they get into something, how do I tell them I really don't feel like I should be the one talking to you about this? And I send them [to the Counseling

> Center] for counseling, but um, there still is the idea that we should be doing our own advising. So yeah, it is a big problem.

Pearson acknowledged that there are not enough advisors at Mid-State and the current advisors "feel very besieged." She shared a situation that occurred this past fall in which students who, as participants in the Developmental Education Program were eligible for early registration and needed to see an advisor before they could register, could not schedule an appointment because the advisors had no openings:

> ...that proved real unfortunate to me that they couldn't get in. They should have been the first people to get in because they are the ones that need the most one-on-one attention...to help them figure out what it is that they are to do.

This lack of advisors, Pearson postulated, is behind the "push on [faculty] to [advise]." She explained that she is trying to work with advisors to set up counseling appointments for her students for next fall's registration so that they will have an opportunity to meet with an advisor and "talk one-on-one about...what they need to do."

Counselors have relatively little overt opposition to the role of advisor being assumed by faculty, but they believe it would be difficult for faculty to remain informed and current regarding all aspects of academic advising in addition to their faculty responsibilities.

*Centralization.* There was concern expressed about the need for centralization of developmental education services. As things currently stand, service providers are located in four different areas of campus:

- Advising services are in the Counseling Office, Student Services Building
- Developmental Education Program coordinator's office is in South Building
- Developmental math is located in the Math Department, Old Central Building

- Developmental reading and writing are in the Language Arts Department, State Building.

In Will Rann's thinking, scattering the various offices around campus is not a desirable situation: "...as a program we have to become more centralized...one of the findings in the research is that the more centralized the program, the more effective." Rann continued by quoting Hunter Boylan: "'...developmental education does not work well when it is a random, nonsystematic effort carried out by uncoordinated units spread across the institutional flow chart' and that would pretty much define us. That's a perfect picture of us."

As desirable and focal to effective program management as centralization would be, such a dramatic change would not come without consequence or issue. Rann expressed several concerns regarding possible repercussions with the implementation of a centralized developmental education program:

> The faculty will be very resistant to a separate department, even though that is the model that seems to be the most effective in getting results and improving retention. They will be very resistant to that because they see themselves as [for example] English people, not developmental educators...and that they will somehow compromise...instruction in English in a developmental department.

Mr. Rann postulated that to locate all developmental education services under one central office and out of the academic departments in which they are currently housed, the faculty and perhaps even advisors would construe this as an issue of power. Instead of being an English or math department member, they would become a developmental education program instructor, thereby necessitating a change in their identity and the "loss of a piece of their turf." Rann cited Boylan in his rebuttal to this notion: "...if you do research-based decision making, it points towards more centralization or

understanding of yourself as a developmental educator." Will Rann's goal was for "every Developmental Education Program instructor to see themselves as a scholar practitioner in developmental education." But, he realized that there is a long way to go before that identity forms.

Rann predicted that there was not going to be a happy solution to centralization:

> ...The kind of coordination that this would mean and the kind of cooperation this would take would be at a level that is not done here, so however we move to centralization it is not going to be a happy move at least for some of the old entrenched full-time people.

In fact, he wondered if centralization would materialize at all, or to what extent. If centralization of program services did not occur in the near future, then minimally some form of regular communication must be maintained among developmental education faculty and staff, another issue of concern to Rann:

> You can do centralization through regular communication—that really means face-to face in teamwork with all the players from student support in the academic side. If we can't even be together one hour in the classroom for advising, we've got a long stretch to go to do that voluntarily. So those are real issues that face us as a program.

Vice President Judith Turnbull shared Will Rann's frustrations regarding centralization of services: "We looked at whether or not we should have a centralized or decentralized program. I've really struggled with that." Turnbull continued by stating that she has been reading a book on developmental education by Hunter Boylan:

> It looked to me like a centralized program might be the most effective, but it might be the hardest as we have a decentralized program now. And so, the question becomes, 'How do you get there?' so we are probably looking at something like a modified decentralized program."

When asked for clarification, Vice President Turnbull responded that according to Boylan, a totally centralized program includes a director who administers all

developmental education courses. Currently Mid-State has a Developmental Education Program director, Will Rann, and courses, but the courses are housed within their particular departments. In order to centralize the program, Turnbull added, faculty who are currently teaching developmental education courses would report to Will Rann, the program director and not to their respective department chairs.

English faculty member Gina Pearson had a different slant on the topic of centralization—she did not support centralization of services. Pearson, too, quoted Boylan in her interview but did so somewhat irreverently, citing Boylan's notion that "The best developmental education programs are centralized," a notion that, Pearson added, "according to Boylan, is *research based...*" [Pearson's emphasis]. Pearson continued by stating that "Boylan also says...that coordinated programs have been well coordinated, [and] can be very successful." Pearson seemed to feel validated by Boylan's claim that a successful developmental education program can be a coordinated program, not necessarily a centralized one. "So, it is more [of a] philosophy...For me it is not territory, it is philosophy. There is a difference in philosophy."

## Summary

Academic advising within this particular setting is an inherently contested process in which differing interests vie for influence. Although sharing some areas of concern, counselors, faculty, and administrators often reflected differing and even competing interests in how academic advising was structured and delivered, as well as its overall goals and purposes. Among the key issues surrounding this process were locations where advising occurred, guidelines for placing students into developmental courses, and ways

to improve academic advising. The strategies used to address these issues varied according to the context and reflected differing power relationships, as suggested in Cervero & Wilson's political theory of planning.

The final chapter will elaborate these findings theoretically and will present implications for their utility to the field, as well as provide recommendations for further research.

# CHAPTER VII

## Discussion

Higher education institutions depend on academic advising to assist students with academic program selection or career guidance. Through such processes they hope to assist students in beginning to organize their lives (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972) and becoming lifelong learners and "effective agents for their...own personal development" (Chickering, 1994, p. 50). While academic advising at four-year institutions is a well-developed area of study (Gordon, Habley, & Associates, 2000), at the community college it is less well studied. In particular, we know relatively little about advising for so-called "at-risk" or "under-prepared" adult learners who typically enroll in community colleges and are assigned to one or more "developmental education" courses.

Developmental education occupies a key role in most community colleges in the United States, often serving up to a third or more of a community college's enrollment at any given time. Through assessment and advising processes, under-prepared learners are assigned to appropriate developmental education classes intended to prepare them for college-level work. Developmental education students, however, are often dealing with a host of psychosocial and economic issues not characteristic of their four-year peers (Frost, 1991; Long & Amey, 1993; Amey & Long, 1998; Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 1999; Grimes & David, 1999). For this reason, community college advising for developmental education students is often a corporate responsibility, typically involving administrators, faculty, support services, and certified counselors, as well as the students themselves.

This research explored the questions of how advising occurs within these complex environments, what theoretical assumptions guide the processes, what various issues arise within these settings, and how these issues are negotiated. Questions that guided the study were:

1. Who are the key players in the process of academic advising for community college developmental education students?
2. What are the views of the key players regarding academic advising in a community college developmental education program?
3. What issues can be identified from the descriptions that are manifested in the differing views?
4. How are issues negotiated within the developmental education program?

Prescriptive and developmental models of academic advising (Cookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972; Grites, 1994) and the politics of planning and negotiation, as described Cervero and Wilson (1994), Forester (1989), and others informed the study.

*Academic Advising as Constituted by Multiple Constituents and Multiple Interests*

Academic advising at Mid-State Community College is a highly contested arena of activity. Several different groups of stakeholders with potentially differing and even conflicting interests influence the process of academic advising for developmental students in the community college: administrators who have power to accept or reject recommendations and are ultimately responsible for programs and services; counselors who support students in their learning, including attending to affective issues; faculty

who develop and teach the courses; and students who need to strengthen skills in certain academic areas, and consequently enroll in the courses.

Frequently embedded in these relationships are conflicting and competing institutional and individual interests, histories and interactions, "hidden agendas," issues of power and jockeying for position, resistance and loose adherence among key players toward program policies and procedures. The ways in which these interests are played out and decisions are mediated are social processes that involve power and power relationships (Cervero and Wilson, 1994). The risk exists of having a process of advising that is administered in different and not always consensual ways.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) posit that "negotiation is the central form of action that planners undertake in constructing programs" and that "negotiation always involves two separate actions that occur simultaneously"—interests and power (p. 29). Successful planners, the authors believe, must be able to interpret organizational power relationships in order to foresee any controversies and to provide the leadership necessary to see the planning process to fruition in a fair way (IBID, p. 115).

At Mid-State Community College, one gets the sense that constituents involved with academic advising oftentimes were not working as one unified entity. Examples of this can be seen in the subjects of Academic Advising Day, the selection process of the placement test, and In-Class Advising. Academic Advising Day, which is located in the Field House, remains a controversial program. Events and decisions associated with Academic Advising Day were made without procuring support from the committee responsible for managing a major constituency of students—the developmental education students. The Developmental Education Program committee was not consulted for their

advice or direction for keeping within the boundaries of the Developmental Education Program as Academic Advising Day was being planned. Will Rann commented "...that it was very probable that they would not think that particular issue through for all its ramifications. Why would they? It's just a small subset of what they have to deal with on a day like that." Even though Rann feigned an understanding of the way things occurred regarding planning for Academic Advising Day, he still harbored feelings that no attention was paid to the students for whom he has main responsibility—the Developmental Education Program students.

There were scarce resources available that day: only two counselors were able to work with developmental education students and computers were in short supply and not working properly. In addition, there were many complaints from faculty members about the goals of Academic Advising Day and the way in which it was implemented.

One wonders why this happened. Rann answered that in planning and decision making committees outside of the Developmental Education Program committee, no one considered developmental education students and how the system is set up for them. "That's where the distinctive boundaries between all the people working with developmental students becomes a problem, because there is no cross discussion."

*A Political Theory of Academic Advising for Developmental Education*

In observations of committee meetings and discussions with study participants, it appeared that decisions regarding the developmental education program at Mid-State are made by one of five methods. The Developmental Education Program committee either:

1. Deliberated on an issue and tabled it for a future meeting

2. Made a decision to proceed with an action without procuring support from outside the committee
3. Made a decision to proceed with an action without procuring support from the committee
4. Sent the committee's recommendation to the Dean's Council for final decision
5. Did nothing because the Dean's Council absent any recommendation from the committee made an executive decision.

We can understand these different decision-making processes and their underlying rationalities by framing the academic advising process from a political perspective. Bolman and Deal (1991) have constructed a matrix entitled *Four Frameworks for Leadership* that presents four unique approaches to leadership and management: *Structural Framework, Human Resource Framework, Political Framework, Symbolic Framework.* Each of the four frameworks approaches management tasks differently. The processes that characterized this case study reflect a reliance primarily on a *political framework.* From this perspective, organizational reality is recognized as inherently political and conflictual. The group facilitator understands conflict and limited resources, the political nature of organizations, and the fact that each person comes to the table with individual interests. S/he identifies major participants and forms bonds with their leadership; s/he is able to manage conflict and use power carefully, and s/he creates situations for negotiating differences. This framework is appropriate when resources are low or waning, when there is diversity, and/or when there is goal and value conflict. The themes used to characterize academic advising process at Mid-State in this study clearly reflect these attributes.

Cervero and Wilson's theory of planning is a way of operationalizing the political framework of Bolman and Deal (1991). According to Cervero and Wilson (1994), planning is closely associated with "institutional contexts that have a history, are composed of interpersonal and organizational relationships of power, and are marked by conflicting wants and interests" (1994, p. 25). In order to successfully plan or facilitate decision-making, planners must be cognizant of how best to proceed in circumstances that are steeped in institutional power relationships, historical milieu and competing interests all vying for consideration and implementation.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) present a matrix, based on Forrester's (1989) work, in which two *Sources of Power Relations—Socially Ad Hoc* and *Socially Systematic*—are considered through two forms of *Relations among Legitimate Interests—Consensual* and *Conflictual* (Cervero and Wilson, 1994, p. 128) as a means of predicting group members' actions. (This framework was explored in detail in Chapter II). The matrix defines four forms of rationality that planners use to address the political dimensions of the planning process.

The negotiation of interests in academic advising at Mid-State Community College reflects primarily a form of rationality that Cervero and Wilson refer to as *structural legitimation.* Conflictual relations or interests and existing organizational situations or interpersonal relationships characterize this situation. In structural legitimation, planners in asymmetrical power relationships have differing, even competing interests which, unless there is a conscious effort otherwise, can contribute to programs that reflect the dominate planners' interests. Cervero and Wilson assert that the strategy best equipped to manage these guidelines is to *counteract* (1994). Planners need

to be cognizant of the ways in which associations of power can guide the planning process and then counteract them in ways that offer power and voice to all participating members of the planning committee. Otherwise, the one who has the most power will triumph.

This situation is illustrated in the way in which the college's current placement test—the Accuplacer—was chosen. When the time came to decide which test to implement at the college, counselor Jane Durfee said the decision was made from an administrative dictate: "There are some decisions being made and not necessarily by us, but this is what we're gonna (sic) do and this is how we're gonna (sic) do it." According to Durfee, committee members greeted this decision with "varying degrees of buy-in." Vice President Judith Turnbull described the story:

> A separate committee was set up [to choose a placement test] and they actually came up with a very tried and true assessment. Well, there was a problem with the writing assessment [part of the test]. I thought it was very time consuming. Plus it was expensive to do. So we looked at different [options]...There was a lot of passion around that [decision]. These people [worked hard on this decision] and then this stupid [vice-president] comes in [laughs] and says "we've got to do it differently."

Vice President Turnbull realized that her decision was controversial and would not be met with accolades: "The [faculty] didn't see any good change" in adopting a different test. Even though there are still faculty members who harbor bitter feelings about Turnbull's decision, she maintained that she made the right decision for Mid-State: "Because the Accuplacer seems to be working." Vice President Turnbull added that the college "will continue to monitor the Accuplacer and see how the students do in the rest of their classes."

The issue of in-class advising represents another area of the process that illustrates one of the ways the committee chose to make decisions - *proceed with an action without procuring support from the committee.* In-Class Advising was a controversial program from its inception. Counselors did not like leaving their "turf" or working with students in large groups; faculty did not like "losing" instructional time for an activity they believed should be conducted outside the classroom on students' time. In spite of strong resistance from both sides, program developers Will Rann and Matt Jefferson by-passed the Developmental Education Program committee and procured permission from department chair people to institute the In-Class Advising Program. The decision to implement In-Class Advising was reached without garnering support from the committee. After two years, it is still considered a pilot program. The program does not have complete buy-in from all counselors and faculty, but in Rann's estimation, there is enough involvement to make it a success.

Will Rann acknowledged that the In-Class Advising Program is not the perfect model and Mid-State historically adapts to change poorly. But he stood by his decision to go outside the Developmental Education committee and to the department heads for support and approval of this program. He stated his belief that the longer the program continues, the more buy-in there would be.

To a lesser degree, other forms of rationality were also evident in the decision-making processes of academic advising at Mid-State. The rationality of individual limits is defined by a temporary organizational situation or interpersonal relationship and consensual interests. Program planners or decision makers face no major conflict from others but the terms of the relationship are not existant or continuing: "The capacity to

act is limited to a particular planning situation" (Cervero and Wilson, 1994). The appropriate strategy for response is *satisficing*.

An example of a decision that was planned with no major opposition from others but also without pre-existing or long-term organizational conditions and/or interpersonal relationships is the Student Victor Program, designed and implemented in fall 2000 by Matt Jefferson, who provided information on the program. When the Student Victor Program was introduced:

> [It was] not so much a formal committee meeting [that planned the program]—it was kind of very informal...it was not a huge program...And then, I was not able to work very closely to the program that he I'd written, so four other counselors were identified that actually went in and met with the class.

Jefferson related how even after two and one-half years of using the Student Victor Program, it is still considered a pilot program: "I would like to institutionalize that piece as part of the Developmental Education Program."

The rationality of *Social Differentiation* reflects consensual relations and interests among decision makers and existing organizational or interpersonal relationships. Participants regularly contribute to decision making in a specific situation and have various information and authority to share with the effort. The strategy suggested for managing social differentiation is *networking*—it is important to maintain a good working relationship with all planning participants. Group uncertainty about including Math 002 as a Developmental Education Program course illustrates this situation.

Math 002, the follow-up course to Math 001 – *A Review of Math Fundamentals,* was recently discussed at a Developmental Education Program committee meeting. Apparently, the course is considered a developmental education course in some situations

but not in all; for example, it is considered a developmental education course for funding purposes, but not according to college procedure that states a hold is to be placed on students' registration cards who place in Math 002 as a means to prevent them from registering in the wrong class. Most committee members seemed to agree that the course should be considered a developmental education course in all areas, not just in selected ones, but also realized the implications of such a change. Developmental Education Program Coordinator Will Rann informed the group that "This is not a simple or hassle-free move. [You] need to know how big a problem this is before [you] proceed. It will add a LOT of work to the counselors, especially if it's not needed."

In a later interview, Rann mentioned that he had sent out an email regarding this issue to get people thinking about their position. It was unclear who, if anyone, engaged in email exchanges with Rann regarding whether or not to include Math 002 in all areas of the Developmental Education Program. I was meeting with Math Chairperson and faculty member, Chris Jacobs, when Will Rann called him to talk about Math 002. Through the emails and phone calls, Rann was networking with other committee members to gain an understanding of their position on the subject.

The rationality of *Pluralist Conflict* illustrates conflictual relations and interests and a temporary organizational situation or interpersonal relationship. This is not a collaborative environment in which to plan a program: not only are there competing interests but planners have little to no long-lasting organizational conditions or personal relationships. Planners involve themselves in the planning effort as a way to promote their own interests with little regard to developing or sustaining any kind of continuing relationship. The recommended strategy for managing Pluralist Conflict is *bargaining*,

or short-term compromise.

In-Class Advising provides a good example of Pluralist Conflict. In spite of strong resistance from faculty and counselors, program developers Will Rann and Matt Jefferson by-passed the Developmental Education Program committee and procured permission from department chair people to institute the In-Class Advising Program. After two years, the program does not have complete buy-in from all counselors and faculty, but there is enough involvement to make it a success.

*The People Work of Program Planning.* In summary, the processes used by participants in academic advising for developmental education at Mid-State were characterized by multiple constituents with differing and often competing interests. Negotiation of these interests reflects the political dimensions of the organizational context and particular forms of rationality described by Cervero and Wilson. The dominant form of rationality evident in these processes, however, is one of structural legitimation, in which interests are regarded as conflictual but are worked through within existing, relatively permanent organizational structures. In most cases, these structures represent positions within the organizational hierarchy that possess administrative power, such as the vice-president and program coordinators.

The examples delineated above help illustrate how planning or decision-making works in favor of people with the power. Cervero and Wilson (1994) ask, "Whose interests will the planners represent in constructing an educational program?" (p. 115). The authors indicate that there are five groups of people whose interests must always be considered by program planners and decision makers: learners, teachers, planners, organizational leadership and the affected public (p. 116). Mid-State Community

College does not follow this credo: it appears as though the students are omitted in program planning, both physically and representationally.

Study participants from Mid-State profess that the college has created an infrastructure designed to give voice to constituents. There are committees that meet regularly to discuss issues pertaining to developmental education, including advising, placement, student progress in the program, curriculum, and other issues. Committee members attend the meetings faithfully, but with the knowledge that much of the hard work they are doing will likely be dismissed and vetoed by individuals invested with more power than they. This "illusion of power" eventually takes a toll on some group members and they are reserved in their contributions and commitment, as when English instructor Gina Pearson commented, "There is some sadness and some cynicism in the sense of why are we continuing to work on a committee without a say in what we do?"

One example illustrated earlier in this chapter told of events that transpired on Academic Advising Day when the system was not set up to register developmental education students. The reason given for this was that in planning for the event, committees outside the Developmental Education Program committee did not consider developmental education students and how the system is set up for them.

Also of interest is the blatant absence of students on the Developmental Education Program committee even though several study participants echoed Charles Nolen's comment when asked if students served on the developmental education committee: "No, but that's a good idea. I don't know why we don't have students on the committee." In considering these two examples, it appears that some planning and decision-making groups at Mid-State plan programs which are "in the students' best interest" without

asking the students what their best interests are.

*The Theory of Academic Advising – Espoused Theory versus Theory-in-Use*

For the most part, academic advising at Mid-State Community College reflects a theory-in-use that is not consistent with the espoused theory. Furthermore, neither the espoused theory nor the theory-in-use seems appropriate to the multiplistic and under-prepared learner context that was observed.

According to Argyris & Schon (1974) and Schon (1983), practitioner work is often characterized by an espoused theory and a theory-in-use. While a detailed description of this distinction is beyond the scope of the present discussion, put simply, an espoused theory refers to what practitioners *say* they do, while a theory-in-use reflects theoretical assumptions evident in their actions – what they *do*.

In the *developmental* model of advising, the advisor adopts a teaching role and the student assumes shared responsibility for learning (Crookston, 1972; O'Banion, 1972). Long-term goals, such as life and career goals, as well as short-term goals, such as choosing a major and specific classes, are the objectives in developmental advising. The *prescriptive* model of advising occurs when advisors assist students in selecting and scheduling courses and pay little attention to students' life goals and its impact on their vocational choices (Grites, 1994). Prescriptive advising is characterized by "a top-down approach, hierarchical relationship, one-directional flow of information and ideas, and the student as passive recipient" (Lowenstein, 1999).

In the academic advising field, it is generally presumed that developmental advising is the preferred model (NACADA, 1994; CAS Standards, 1997). Developmental advising is considered comprehensive and "good academic advising"

(CAS Standards for Student Services/Development Programs, 1997).

Counselors at Mid-State Community College responded that they are guided and informed by a developmental advising model. When asked what developmental advising meant to them, most defined it in ways similar to counselor Alyssa Martin:

> To sit down and speak with a student and find out what his or her goals are, what their interests in that are...we tell them [their] options. Then the end product, if the student is ready to do that, is to sit down and actually pick out [courses]...try to set some short-term goals—what do they want to take this semester? How busy do they want to be? And then [set] long-term goals—maybe a year to five years out. Where do they want this to take them?

Martin further stated that developmental advising means to "...meet with students [and] help them decide on work, career and academic goals." Martin stressed that she tries to help her advisees become more responsible. These statements are truly indicative of the developmental advising model.

However, there seemed to be some discrepancy between counselors' words and their actions: even though they professed to advise in a developmental style, through observations and counselors' responses to interview questions, the prescriptive model of advising seemed more prevalent. Charles Nolen, Program Director of the Counseling Center, started out describing developmental advising, but quickly shifted into the prescriptive model of advising:

> I think the counselor's role and responsibility is to listen to the student, first and foremost. Find out what the student's interests are, help the student understand how he or she did on the placement exam, and translate that into what classes will be necessary for that student to be successful.

Rann described a typical advising session:

> The counselor may spend anywhere from a minimum of seven minutes to a maximum of probably fifteen. There's very little

> advising that happens. Counselors simply place students in classes. If there are no open classes in developmental education, they look for the most likely thing they can put these kids into...So there is a procedure in place here, but it is not always adhered to.

When counselors must work with large numbers of students and can only spend five to ten minutes with each student, the developmental approach to advising is not time-efficient or practical. It becomes the only choice to register the student for any class that fits the schedule, whether the student expresses interest in the subject or not. The timeliness of this approach simply precludes delving into the student's thoughts to discover his/her life and vocational goals, and then matching an academic program and specific courses to the goals.

An observation conducted at Academic Advising Day in the Field House supports the contention that counselors at Mid-State more closely follow a prescriptive model of advising than a developmental approach as their claims state. Long lines of developmental education students waited in some instances for over four hours to talk to one of two counselors. When they finally reached the head of the line, they received approximately five minutes with a counselor. There was no discussion of any type beyond trying to find classes to fit a schedule. Students were placed into any class that fit an open block of time on their schedules. One of the counselors insisted on proceeding with an interview that I had previously arranged to conduct with him that day. It was impossible for him to leave the registration table at that time, he stated, so, despite my requests for rescheduling, the interview was conducted. It was very difficult to talk frankly about developmental education students when one is sitting three feet away.

Events such as these do not represent an approach that offers the student a strong motivation toward student success and academic achievement, as Kuh asserts academic

advising should do (1997). Nor do they encourage the student to reflect on vocational and curricular decisions as they progress through their college experience. Indeed, such events are more representative of the haphazard approach to decision making that counselors and others involved in advising are admonished to avoid.

*Centralization.* Currently Mid-State is considering centralizing developmental education programs and services. This has caused resistance among some faculty and staff members because it constitutes a change in the status quo and, as Dr. Nolen reminded, "changes scare the people." There are faculty members at Mid-State Community College who fear that if their course is taken out of their academic department and housed in a central unit, their "turf" is being usurped or the chance exists that they will lose their jobs. According to Dr. Nolen, "People want to work in their individual silos and don't want to do a lot of coordinated stuff." Will Rann added that the kind of coordination and cooperation that program centralization would entail would be at a level not done at Mid-State: "So however we move to centralization, it is not going to be a happy move, at least for some of the old entrenched full-time people."

*Neither Developmental nor Prescriptive Advising at Mid-State.* Prescriptive advising assumes consensus among multiple players. This means that it is assumed that all involved participants of an advising program agree that certain criteria are the correct ones to follow. But there is no consensus regarding advising in the Developmental Education Program at Mid-State because the overall aims and processes of advising are not well established, and the kinds of requirements that advising needs to address are not agreed upon. With prescriptive advising, there is little to no variation in philosophy or methodology—there is just consensus and uniformity.

At Mid-State, counselors purport that they follow a developmental model of advising but in observations and interview probes, it is apparent that the prescriptive model is more predominant. Some reasons for this include attrition of key participants and competing multiple interests. It is problematic and exceedingly difficult to maintain continuity when personnel change constantly. Counselor Jane Durfee recounted how there has been a large turnover in the Counseling Center in the past few years:

> We've had probably over 50 percent turnover in our office since I started. [There were] a lot of retirements. It's like a lot of places in education now where some people are leaving and they're being replaced with new people who are coming in and trying to find their way...the relationship is starting to build.

It is also difficult to engage adequately in developmental advising when there are 12,000 credit and non-credit students attending Mid-State and ten academic advisors and counselors on staff to meet students' advising and counseling needs. Lack of time and energy simply prohibit exploring a long-term plan with each student, including vocational and academic goals and aspirations.

Is it possible that we have missed something in our analysis of Mid-State's advising program? Any academic advising journal or book that one may peruse extols the qualities of the developmental approach to advising while scoffing at the prescriptive model. However, in using the developmental model of advising with developmental education students, are we trying to conjure up the old "one size fits all" jingle? Does that really work in this situation? When considering students, did it ever work in any situation?

Maybe what we are observing is a case in which neither model, prescriptive nor developmental, fits. Both models assume a certain paradigm: prescriptive advising assumes consensus, as described above and developmental advising assumes that

developmental education students are capable of making decisions such as choosing a vocation. Perhaps this simply is not realistic.

We know that developmental education students arrive on campus with varied and countless issues, with academic preparation being but one of them. Grites (1982) and Frost (1991) write that developmental education students have difficulty with decision-making skills and are poorly informed and unclear about career goals—do we expect them to be able to make a decision about which career to pursue? Developmental education students oftentimes have trouble with low self-concept and need to experience academic success but are reluctant to get academic help (Frost, 1991). Do we think they will easily and readily go see their counselor to explore their life goals or choice of academic program? Many under-prepared students lack basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and study habits (Grites, 1982; Frost, 1991). Is it fair to expect them to be cognizant about selecting courses that are aligned with their program of study?

Maxwell (1997) writes that not only are developmental students academically under-prepared and struggling with coursework, there are other obstacles that make attending college difficult for these students. Some may be working full time, they may have family responsibilities, they may have little or no support from family members, some are high school dropouts, some may be learning-disabled or products of poor school districts, many have economic hardships, some are recovering from substance abuse or mental illness, some are international students or students for whom English is their second language, some were told they could not learn and would never amount to anything.

This is not to say that developmental advising will not work with developmental

education students. Advisors who work with developmental education students may still advise on issues of life goals, vocational interests and strengths and course selection, (O'Banion, 1972), but their primary responsibility is to provide support and information to students and faculty regarding institutional programs and services designed for student success (Maxwell, 1997).

The findings suggest that a new model of advising for developmental education students is needed. This model should reflect the diverse characteristics of developmental students and the tools they will need for successful navigation through college. The model should also reflect the politically contested nature of academic advising, and the ways in which political interests shape and inform the nature of advising. Such a model should also be informed and guided by the developmental and prescriptive models.

Lowenstein (1999) suggests that developmental advising is not a model of advising. Rather, it is a theory about the content of developmental advising. Lowenstein advocates use of a style of advising he terms collaborative advising, which is characterized by "dialogue, a two-way flow of ideas and information (while recognizing that the adviser may have specialized knowledge that the student does not), a question-and-answer approach and the student as active participant." He posits that many versions of this content of advising are possible, with one that he likes being academically centered advising. He compares developmental advising to academically centered advising by writing that developmental advising focuses on the student's personal growth and development while academically centered advising centers on the student's academic learning.

So, what does this mean for the practice of advising developmental education students? Such a process would involve a content-focused advising system that speaks to developmental education issues. The content should consist of what developmental education students need to successfully "do college." Of course, it will be unique to each student depending on their specific experiences and needs. Nevertheless, there will be common components appropriate for developmental education students, such as understanding the expectations of college, managing academics with other parts of the student s life, handling stress, et cetera. Even in a world of budget cuts and program downsizing, such a model does not reflect an inefficient use of resources. Resource intensive processes are already provided specifically for special populations of students. Under-prepared and other definitions of at-risk students should also be included as a special population. Such a process would increase the likelihood that such students are truly being served. Rethinking how academic advising for developmental education students is conceptualized and delivered will undoubtedly reveal other things we can be doing to ensure their success in college.

*Implications for other contexts*

Although the findings of this study relate directly to academic advising in a community college developmental education program, the preceding discussion suggests its application to other two and four-year institutions, and to different organizational models of advising. The differing interests identified in this study, the fundamentally political nature through which these interests are negotiated, and the ways in which power is used to make decisions point to dimensions of academic advising characteristic of other

institutional settings and models of advising. However, there has not been much in the way of conversation or exploration of these issues in the literature on academic advising.

Taken together, the political nature of advising and the assumptions about academic advising reflected among the key players in this study suggest three issues applicable to a wider range of contexts: authority, power, and inclusion. They raise the questions: Who has responsibility and the power to make and enact decisions and to represent our values and shared vision? From where do responsibility and power originate? Do I have responsibility and power? Am I part of this group? If not, to which group do I belong? These issues help us better understand what values and interests are enacted within particular institutional and organizational configurations of academic advising, and ultimately the overall nature and quality of such institutional processes.

The issues of authority, power, and inclusion are clearly evident in this study in the ways in which certain issues and decisions relative to academic advising for developmental education are negotiated. While counselors felt most comfortable and authoritative within their own terrain (the Counseling Center), it was clear that disruptions in their sense of location or place served to undermine their authority. Working in the Field House or classroom settings, they seemed less confident in their role and effectiveness. Furthermore, they had relatively little say in the decision to locate the process of advising beyond the walls of the Counseling Center.

Teachers found themselves in a similar position. While sympathetic to and strongly supportive of the needs of developmental education students for advising, the teachers felt their own curricular authority undermined by the placement of counselors within their classrooms, however brief the period of time. They valued the need for

advising but their vision of how to best address this need was not necessarily represented in this decision to use instructional time for group academic advising. Furthermore, advising in the Field House frustrated both teachers and students. In this case, teachers were asked to act as advisors, locating them outside of their normal classroom teacher roles and space. But they were given relatively little authority to make decisions in situations that were problematic for the students. These decisions were the domain of the developmental education coordinator and had to be referred to him. This process often resulted in long delays for students seeking assistance with their programs.

As power and authority shaped the kinds of values enacted within the process of academic advising, it also served to influence a sense of boundaries, of who belongs where, of a sense of inclusion. The academic advisors in this program are all certified counselors and preferred to refer themselves as such. Yet, what they did for developmental education students and the role they played in the overall program was largely perceived by the teachers and administrators as advising. Thus, there seems to be an inherent tension within the advising role when professionals staff it. This tension raises the question to what community of practitioners academic advisors belong. Within this context, it is also illuminating to mention that they held faculty status within the institution. Thus, institutionally, the role itself seems to invite a blurring of one's professional identity and the community of practice with which one ultimately is aligned.

This issue of inclusion is also evident in the teachers' perceptions of their role in academic advising for developmental education students. While their primary role is that of teacher, they are increasingly being asked to play an increasingly larger role in the advising of students as well. This is evident in their participation in Academic Advising

Day at the Field House, opening their classrooms to group advising by counselors and their participation on the developmental education committee. Advising issues occupied much of the time and attention of this committee but, interestingly, many members of this committee also perceived themselves as relatively powerless to enact any of the values that surfaced in their work or the decisions they made. In addition to teaching in the developmental education program, these teachers were also members of separate academic departments. This dual membership seemed to raise questions for them as well as to which community do they belong. Faculty in their parent departments are not always supportive of developmental students and, at times, can be stridently opposed to the use of institutional resources to address their needs.

As a result of the ways in which authority, power, and inclusion are negotiated at Mid-State Community College, there is relatively little sense of shared values around academic advising. Decisions made are haphazard and inconsistent. Individuals with authority and power to make decisions do so guided by their individual values, attitudes and beliefs. Institutional leaders make decisions based on what they value.

Thus, surfacing through the stories and observations included in this study of academic advising are issues of power, authority, and inclusion, issues which are evident in other contexts of academic advising but are not, to any great extent, addressed in the literature.

The pluralistic and political nature of academic advising, the diverse needs of the students for whom such a process is intended, and the need to continuously address decisions that arise within this process suggest the need for a democratic model of planning and decision-making (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). This approach recognizes the

multiple interests that constitute academic advising and the need for a process that both honors these differences as well as provides for an ethical means of working across these differences.

*Implications for future research*

These findings suggest additional research is needed regarding a conceptual model for guiding academic advising in diverse and pluralistic settings that serve under-prepared adult learners. They raise questions regarding the prescriptive model of academic advising reflected in this and other advising programs, in which consensus regarding what under-prepared students need is assumed. In addition, they also call into question the appropriateness of the developmental advising model, in which the process assumes a level of self-directedness and self-authorship not characteristic of most under-prepared adult learners when they first enroll for study at a community college.

The field of academic advising would benefit by considering the situational aspects of advising; specifically, the type of college—two or four year; the type of student—under-prepared or prepared; the type of advisor—professional or faculty; and other such characteristics. Advising should provide an individualized approach to students' needs, not a generic approach designed for the masses.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) proposed a theory for program planning that was used in this study to explore the political aspects of negotiation and academic advising in a developmental education program at *one* community college. This type of study needs to be replicated several times and then to be applied to other situations and contexts to ascertain its applicability to situations outside of program planning.

*Implications for practice*

This study has implications for academic advisors and counselors who advise developmental education students, faculty who teach developmental education students, administrators who count developmental education program and students as part of their charge, students everywhere, and anyone involved in leadership, group dynamics, negotiation, and institutional decision-making.

Based on study findings, several implications are recommended for *advisors and counselors* who advise developmental education students. This study can remind advisors and counselors to individualize their advising practice as much as possible to allow for maximum advising benefits to their students. Students arrive on campus with different backgrounds, experiences, goals and ideas, and by treating all students as needing the same attention and services, advisors and counselors are not being fair to their students. Findings from this study can specifically help advisors and counselors who work with developmental education students understand them better, and tailor their interactions to these students' needs and capabilities.

Invariably some of the techniques faculty use for teaching one group of students, in this case, developmental education students, can translate into practice and utility for other groups of students, thereby improving faculty's pedagogy all around. Findings from this study can also help faculty know and understand advising techniques and employ them comfortably and confidently in situations that call for such measures.

Advising and developmental education programs must have administrators' support if there is any hope of producing a successful program and maintaining it. Findings from this study call for administrators to empower groups and committees to act

and make decisions in order to sustain participant interest, energy and commitment, which ultimately lead to program betterment, improvement pedagogy and stronger and better-prepared students.

S*tudents* everywhere can benefit from this study. Students desiring to be faculty members as well as graduate students studying Student Affairs, Educational Administration, Counseling Psychology, Leadership Development, group dynamics, principles of negotiation and decision-making theories and many other areas will learn how one postsecondary institution approached the problem of exploring how the function of academic advising is negotiated among the key players involved in a developmental education program. Developmental education students who are part of a group involved in program planning or decision-making will find this study helpful in understanding how groups work amidst power relationships and personal interests, as will anyone else involved in leadership, group dynamics, negotiation, or institutional decision-making.

*Recommendations*

Understanding program planning and decision making as social processes in which participants must negotiate between contradictory interests while also considering relationships of power (Cervero and Wilson, 1994) provides a useful lens for understanding how the function of academic advising in one community college developmental education program was handled. Recommendations that resulted from this study regarding mandatory placement, In-Class and faculty advising, empowerment of groups and committees, and training and program evaluation will be presented in this section.

It is imperative that Mid-State Community College require adherence to institutional policies. To have organizational guidelines and procedures reliant upon the discretion of the advisor or instructor is not a sound policy. Mandatory placement should be just that—mandatory.

Several components have been mentioned often in the literature as contributing to academic success: centralized program organization, mandatory assessment, mandatory placement, tutoring, early and mandatory advising and program evaluation (Long & Amey, 1993; Boylan, Bliss & Bonham, 1997; Amey & Long, 1998; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Interestingly, some of these components are currently being debated at Mid-State Community College: centralized program organization, mandatory assessment and mandatory placement. It is recommended that Mid-State adopt these components. Partial buy-in to these details is not sufficient—the institution must take a stand and require adherence to adopted policies by all involved. To do less is slightly better than to not do it at all.

It is recommended that faculty embrace Mid-State's various advising programs and delivery systems, such as the Academic Advising Day, In-Class Advising and Student Victor programs, and invite counselors into their classrooms to focus on areas in which developmental students need work: decision making skills, career exploration, self-advocacy, self-concept, intrinsic motivation, locus of control, et cetera (Ender & Wilkie, 2002). Appleby (2001) advocates an advising program consisting of multiple delivery systems, including email, workshops, panels, telephone, peer advising and alumni mentoring, classes, seminars, group advising and handbooks. Of equal importance is that developmental education students need an advising approach different

from status quo advising: they require more individualized attention than non-developmental students, so smaller advising groups or even individual sessions is suggested (Jones & Becker, 2002). This gives credibility to the In-Class and Student Victor Advising Programs.

It is recommended that Mid-State Community College enact faculty advising. Faculty have expertise associated with their discipline and are generally knowledgeable about jobs in their field. Professional advisors or counselors usually have student development backgrounds and advising is their chief focus, so they have experience working with different populations of students. Furthermore, they are most often housed in a central location making them readily available to students. King (2003) writes that "Given the complexity of our programs and the increasing diversity of our students, it is unrealistic to expect one group to be able to do it all." King also stresses the importance of having faculty buy-in—otherwise students will not receive the quality advising they deserve.

The voice of students is virtually absent in this process. It is important that students are involved in groups that profess to represent them. The Developmental Education Program committee at Mid-State Community College must include students to really know what their interests are and to "allow all people affected by an educational program to have a substantive role in constructing the curriculum" (Cervero and Wilson, 1994, p. 115). This is "responsible planning" (IBID) and Mid-State owes it to its constituents to be responsible.

Training in the skills and knowledge necessary for advising developmental education students is crucial for new and current employees who work with these

students. Counselors, faculty and anyone else who interacts with developmental education students need to know their students' characteristics and the various strategies for best practices in order to serve this population of student well.

One thing missing from the advising and Developmental Education Program is a strong evaluation component. Mid-State's Office of Institutional Research must work collaboratively with campus programs to develop evaluation instruments designed to collect data necessary for evaluation. In order to assess their programs and make improvements, Mid-State must make program evaluation a strong, regular occurrence.

Planners and decision-makers need to know whose interests they are representing and who has power. They must be able to read various situations in which they find themselves and be able to negotiate power and interests responsibly. By being familiar with issues such as these, they will be able to create and sustain better programs and resolutions, leading ultimately to better outcomes and stronger programs. Planners and decision-makers must remain politically astute and act in a manner concordant with a political understanding of their organizational context. Diverse contexts require diverse planning strategies in order to facilitate an egalitarian planning process.

It is recommended that Mid-State coordinate the developmental education services. Recent research findings suggests that a strong coordination of services may be just as effective as centralized programs (Boylan, Bliss, & Bonham, 1997) as long as there is communication among those constituents involved in the program.

## Summary

Institutional leaders make decisions based on what they value. Individuals with authority and power to make decisions do so guided by their individual values, attitudes and

beliefs. Ideals held by constituent members are responded to with little regard. At Mid-State Community College, there are no shared values around academic advising: decisions are made in an indiscriminate and inconsistent fashion. It would behoove the college for its leaders to become more inclusive of other stakeholders' values.

# APPENDIX ONE

# INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## APPENDIX ONE

### Interview Protocol

1. Background

- What is your role at Mid-State Community College?
- How long have you worked here?
- Tell me about your educational background: degrees earned, institutions attended.
- How did you get involved working with developmental education students?

2. Process of advising at MSCC

- What happens when a student enrolls at MSCC who is under-prepared?
  Describe the procedures used with under-prepared students.
  What are the academic advisor's responsibilities in these processes?
- What is advising model like here? (De/centralized; Faculty/counselor, combination?)
- Walk me through a new student's process from applying to college through the first day of classes, -end of first semester, -end of year.
- Take me through a typical advising session with a student, from when appointment is made through end of appointment.
  What are the academic advisor's responsibilities in these processes?
- Who/what office administers placement tests?—directs Orientation?

3. Description of DE students

- Describe the developmental education student at MSCC.
- How are DE students identified?
- In what ways are they similar/different from one another?
- Describe a situation where you were working with an under-prepared student, and things went 1) well; 2) poorly. What happened? Who was involved? How was it resolved?

4. Others involved

- Who is involved in the advising of developmental education students?
  What are their roles and responsibilities?
- What are the academic advisor's responsibilities in these processes?
- Who supervises academic advisors?
- Who is involved in decision-making?
- How are decisions about advising made?

5. Factors influencing advising

What influences the process of advising?

6. Meaning of advising regarding DE students

- What does advising mean to you?
- What is its value to the college's mission?
- How is advising and teaching similar/different?
- What should advising be like?
- What changes and improvements should be made?
  By whom? For whom? Why?

Comments:

# APPENDIX TWO

# LETTER TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

## APPENDIX TWO

### Letter to Study Participants

Dear _____: September 27, 2002

My name is Lisa Haston and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration in the College of Education at Michigan State University. Dean _____ suggested I contact you to invite you to participate in the data collection for my dissertation. You were recommended because of your involvement in academic advising in the developmental education program at Mid-State Community College.

My dissertation, entitled "In Whose Interests? Negotiating Academic Advising in a Community College Developmental Education Program" will focus on the ways in which a pre-selected group of community college personnel arrives at decisions regarding academic advising for students enrolled in a developmental education program at a community college. I have chosen Mid-State Community College as the site for data collection because it has a well-established developmental education program.

My methods of data collection include:

- Interviews with college personnel involved with academic advising in the developmental education program
- Document analyses of materials pertinent to advising in the developmental education program
- Observations at meetings where advising issues related to the developmental education program are discussed.

I would like to schedule a one-hour interview with you, either in your college office or another location of your choice. Please know that your participation in this study is voluntary—you may choose not to participate at all or you may refrain from answering any question. Please be assured that complete confidentiality of Mid-State Community College and each participant will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Pseudonyms will be used and neither the college nor the participants will be identifiable in any report of research findings.

I would like to begin interviews at Mid-State Community College the week of October 7, 2002. You may reach me at 517.267.9107 or hastonli@msu.edu if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you regarding your participation in my study.

Thank you.

Lisa A. Haston

# APPENDIX THREE

# INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## APPENDIX THREE

### Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project studying the roles and attitudes of community college personnel who are involved in a developmental education program. Lisa Haston, a doctoral student in the Higher, Adult and Lifelong Education Program in Educational Administration at Michigan State University, is conducting this study.

**Procedures**

I will be asking you some questions about the function of academic advising in the developmental education program at your community college. The purpose of this study is to understand how the function of academic advising is negotiated among key players involved in a community college developmental education program. The interview will take approximately one hour. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You are free to refrain from answering any question you do not wish to answer and you may stop the interview at any time. Your identity and your comments will be kept confidential. At no time will your actual name be used. I would like to tape record our conversation so I can accurately capture what you say and can participate in our conversation without having to focus heavily on taking notes while you talk. Upon completion of the data analysis, the interview tapes will be destroyed.

This is a consent form that I would like you to read and sign, which gives me permission to use your comments in my work without identifying exactly who you are or where you work.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

**Contacts and Questions**

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns regarding the study, please feel free to contact Ms. Haston at 517.337.0379 or hastonli@msu.edu. Ms. Haston's dissertation advisor is Professor John Dirkx and can be reached at 517.353.8927 or dirkx@msu.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, please contact Ashir Kumar, chairperson of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) at 517.355.2180.

**You will receive a copy of this form for your records.**

**Statement of Consent**

By signing below you agree that you have read the above information and had an opportunity to ask the researcher questions. Your signature shows that you agree to voluntarily participate in this interview.

Signature Date

Name

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