Experience: Academic Advising

Last week I had my first full internship day with Anne Young in the College of Health Professions, School of Nursing advising office. She described her job involved and I got a great glimpse into a typical day for an advisor. Job shadowing is an important part of learning about careers and gives students a new perspective on the position. According to Lozada (2001), "Students can see for themselves how the skills they are learning in school are applied to a career and ask their mentors specific questions about their jobs. They can also observe ‘soft skills,’ such as customer service, teamwork and professionalism in the workplace” (p.31). During my first day, I was definitely able to assess the job and learn all of these things from my mentor, Anne. Anne’s main advisees are pre-nursing students. Applying to the nursing program at FGCU is a two-step process. First, prospective students must apply to the university and get in under the university requirements. Once they are in, they would be admitted as pre-nursing. By their sophomore year, they would apply to the nursing school by filling out a separate application. At the time of the application deadline (Feb. 1\textsuperscript{st} for Fall, May 15\textsuperscript{th} for Spring), they must have grades for 2 science courses, a 3.0 gpa and have taken the TEAS test. Our nursing program is a limited access program which means there is certain selection criteria, but there are a limited number of spots in the program. It is a very competitive program, so applicants that meet the criteria may not make it in. Many of Anne’s advising appointments consist of students concerned about their grades and about getting into the program. She gets them thinking about their next steps and the options they have.

While I was there we had two students come into speak with Anne. The first was on academic warning and needed Anne to help her rearrange her schedule. Anne advised her that she needs to be aware of her gpa and really work hard these next couple of semesters to bring it up. The second advising appointment was a student who was dismissed from the nursing program. Anne said she rarely sees these students as they usually move on and choose a different major. However, this one came in to discuss his next steps as he wanted to reapply to the major. So, she showed him a few things he could do such as withdraw from the classes he was currently doing poorly in because of extenuating circumstances and go undeclared until he reapplied.

Anne is also in charge of freshman and transfer orientation for pre-nursing students. She went over the PowerPoint presentation she uses during those orientations and explained the general education requirements, Gordon Rule, pre requisites and applying to the nursing school. She gives students an orientation packet with the academic calendar, a list of Gordon Rule and Gen Eds, Nursing Pre Reqs, and a personalized schedule of the quickest way to get through the first two years while satisfying all requirements to apply to the nursing program. She also gives students a paper that lists helpful offices with contact information for staff in those offices. This
is a great way to bridge the gap across academic and administrative units and unite campus resources.

She showed me facts.org where students can get all kinds of information on college and programs. This is also where students fill out transient forms to take classes at other institutions. Anne goes into the system and approves the courses for the students to take at other schools after looking in Banner and making sure they fulfill the prerequisite requirements for that course.

Since Anne is responsible for the nursing applicants, her and her assistant, Beta, process and create a spreadsheet of all students applying to the nursing program. The deadline for Spring is 2011 was May 15th, so this week we will be working on entering all the student information on the sheet so the committee can easily view all the information.

The committee Anne is most involved in is the Academic Advising Council (AAC) as it consists of advisors all over campus that come together and support each other and go over issues that arise. I read over the minutes from the last meeting and they were very informative. It showed me some of the main issues that advisors throughout campus have to deal with. One issue is the excess hours fee. This fee will take effect on new students entering college in Fall 2009 and later. If they take over 20% of their degree requirements, there will be an excess charge. This will affect them in four to five years. For nursing students, this is serious business. Pre-nursing students who retake classes for grade forgiveness to get into nursing school, and don’t make it in have a greater chance of receiving this fee because they usually have to start over with a new major which would cause them to take too many hours. Anne suggests that these students go to Community Health or Health Science where their prerequisites are similar to Nursing, so they won’t have to take as many new courses.

I learned so much just from observing Anne. She is kind hearted and has a very caring spirit. She is optimistic and truly believes in her students. She has taught at the college level before and worked at a community college for 14 years, so she has experience on both sides. She even won Advisor of the Year in 2007. Anne believes in developmental advising rather than prescriptive advising and she has had some issues with this with administration because they believe advising is not “teaching”. According to Lowenstein (2005), Crookston’s developmental advising model is a “two-directional dialogue (instead of a monologue) in which the student and advisor interact, and the student is an active (rather than passive) participant. In the ideal case, the student is changed by the process; that is, his or her personal development is enhanced” (p.67). In my Trends in Career Development class through Kansas State University, we learned about the developmental advising theory and I am a strong supporter of this philosophy. I believe students can learn more than just what classes to take from their advisor. Their advisor is there to teach them how to cope with their new life in college and guide them down a path to success. It is great to be working with someone with similar values, who cares so much about students and wants to see every one of them succeed.

Standards: Standard 1: Vision & Standard 3: Managing the Learning Environment
Standard 1 is reflected in this activity because I learned about Anne’s philosophy in advising and what she values as an advisor. Her vision has inspired me to be an administrator who cares about every single one of their students.

Standard 3 is reflected in this activity because I was able to see a “day in the life” of an advisor and see how Anne manages all of her tasks. She has a great variety of job duties which is something I really enjoy. She stays organized with all of her files and student notes. She is very professional when meeting with students and an encouraging and optimistic advisor.

References
