

Illinois Wesleyan University

Reflective Advising Packet for Advisors

Fall 2019

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INTERNAL STATEMENT FOR CAMPUS CONSTITUENTS RE. REFLECTIVE ADVISING

At Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU), reflective advising will become a hallmark of our small, liberal arts education and depends on strong collaboration and effort from all faculty and staff. It is holistic, reflective, forward-looking, and student-centered and will contribute positively to retention rates and the long-term success and persistence of our students.

Reflection:

- is defined as a future-oriented and retrospective process that involves an examination of instances and experiences, a critical analysis of their origins and outcomes that leads to new realizations and appreciations, and the conclusions that guide future actions and behavior (Boud, 2001)¹.
- has a strong connection to increasing self-awareness, improving creative thinking skills, encouraging engagement in their academics and personal life, and fostering empathy in students (Moon, 1999)².
- "is not an end in itself, but a tool or vehicle used in the transformation of raw experience into meaning-filled theory that is grounded in experience, informed by existing theory, and serves the larger purpose of the moral growth of the individual and society" (Rodgers, 2002, p. 863)³.

Why is reflection important?

Reflection...

- deepens and broadens learning;
- facilitates identity formation;
- strengthens connections with others;
- develops self-authorship; and
- encourages lifelong learning (Furman, 2019)⁴.

¹ Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 90,9-18.

² Moon, J. (1999). *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development*. London: Kogan Page. In Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 90, 9-18.

³ Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking, 842-866.

⁴ Furman University Ad Hoc Reflection Committee. (2019). *Reflection at Furman*. Greenville, SC.

WORKING DRAFT: MISSION OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AT ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Illinois Wesleyan University is dedicated to and recognizes the importance of exceptional academic advising as a critical aspect of students' educational experiences. Through the utilization of reflective advising, the mission of academic advising at Illinois Wesleyan University is for faculty and staff to:

- actively collaborate with students to reflect upon, develop, and implement cohesive and holistic educational plans as they pursue their academic, professional, and personal goals;
- establish engaged partnerships with students based on shared responsibility;
- guide students to campus resources that will assist them in achieving their goals; and
- foster an understanding and deep appreciation of the purpose and value of the liberal arts in higher education.

WORKING DEFINITION: REFLECTIVE ADVISING

Reflective advising helps students thrive at Illinois Wesleyan University by:

- Helping students understand and communicate the value of their liberal arts education;
- Responding to Illinois Wesleyan University's mission of realizing individual potential and developing global citizens;
- Fostering a holistic approach to curricular and co-curricular engagement;
- Assisting students in navigating failures and celebrating successes;
- Encouraging students to focus on their overall wellbeing;
- Recognizing how students' identities impact their experiences and perspectives;
- Inspiring students to seek meaning and purpose;
- Engaging students in reflective conversations about their academic, career, and life goals;
- Referring students to campus resources to maximize their unique educational and personal potential;
- Guiding students as they:
 - investigate the available programs as they determine their field(s) of study;
 - select courses to complete requirements for their fields(s) of study, general education, and University graduation requirements;
 - develop and continually assess an academic plan for timely graduation.
- Aiding students in pursuing career and post-baccalaureate options within or related to their chosen field(s) of study; and
- Preparing students to articulate a narrative and craft a resume reflective of their experiences and accomplishments.

WORKING DRAFT: ACADEMIC ADVISING EXPECTATIONS

Effective academic advising requires a **partnership** between the student and the academic advisor.

An advisee can expect *their advisor* to:

- Offer opportunities to reflect holistically on themselves and their experiences at IWU.
- Assist them in understanding the purposes and goals of a liberal arts education.
- Effectively communicate the curriculum, graduation requirements, and university policies and procedures.
- Guide them as they define and develop realistic goals.
- Support them as they make academic progress according to their educational plans.
- Monitor their academic progress.
- Be accessible for advising during posted office hours, or via phone and email.
- Be a sounding board as students navigate decisions about their education.
- Facilitate discussions about how to learn from and work effectively with their professors.
- Encourage them to get involved with a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities (e.g. study abroad, internships, research, student organizations).
- Refer them to appropriate university resources as needed.

An advisor can expect *their advisee* to:

- Reflect holistically on themselves and their experiences at IWU.
- Attend regular appointments and make regular email and phone contact with their advisor each semester.
- Come prepared to each appointment with questions, reflections, or material for discussion.
- Participate fully in the advising experience.
- Ask questions if they do not understand a topic or have a specific concern.
- Complete all “to dos” and consider recommendations from their advisor.
- Become knowledgeable about requirements, policies, and procedures through the use of the University Catalog.
- Regularly review and track their academic progress using their degree evaluation.
- Follow through on referrals to appropriate campus resources.
- Be open to discussing the impact of their priorities and decisions.

HELPING SKILLS

Brainstormed by IWU faculty and staff participants at Spring 2019's Behind Closed Door workshops.

- Demonstrate engagement and be fully present in the moment.
 - This may also include limiting distractions like technology and also being aware of the benefits or limitations of the space in which you are meeting.
 - Is this a public or semi-private space?
 - How do you maintain confidentiality as well as maintain a connection to the wider office or department in which you work?
- Be aware of your own non-verbal communication and physical proximity and make good eye contact. Also, note that expectations of non-verbal communication, physical proximity, and eye contact vary across cultures.
- Be consistent in your availability and your response to student concerns.
- Build trustworthiness by interacting with authenticity, integrity, and well-established boundaries.
- Listen well.
 - Affirm and/or clarify the students' perspective by reflecting back what you've heard.
 - Don't interrupt.
- Keep an open mind and resist making assumptions.
 - Be mindful of your own biases, identity, and experiences as you listen and respond.
- Your job is not to "fix" or "solve" the situation then and there.
 - Instead, invite brainstorming and reflection about possible solutions and offer resources.
 - If you don't know what the possible solutions and resources might be, be honest about that and seek them out by asking permission to talk to other faculty/staff about the situation.
- Respect the inherent dignity, worth, and potential of the student, especially when serious setbacks or mistakes make that challenging.

FIRST-YEAR REFLECTIVE ADVISING DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

1. First-Year Advising Info Sheet

- a. Included in all first-year student's advising folders
- b. To be distributed and filled out during new student orientation
- c. Goal is for the first-year advisor to gather information to start to get to know the student
- d. Can be left in the advising folder for future advisors (if applicable) to have a bit of background information on the student

2. First-Year Advising Worksheet

- a. Included in all first-year student's advising folders
- b. To be utilized in advising appointments throughout the student's first year (and beyond)
- c. Goal of this worksheet is to assist in the facilitation of reflective advising conversations
- d. Taking notes on the worksheet is encouraged for the advisor
- a. The questions on the worksheet are example questions, additional questions can be found below

QUESTIONS TO FACILITATE REFLECTIVE ADVISING

This list of questions has been developed to help advisors facilitate reflective advising; it will continue to be edited and updated.

General:

- What are your short-term/long-term goals?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What do you do well/engage in that are strengths for you (e.g. academics, co-curricular activities)?
- What are your interests?
- What would you like to explore and learn more about?
- What values are important to you?
- What academic skills and abilities do you want or need to develop?
- Do you feel emotionally content? If not, what can be done to improve this?
- What do you fear the most?
- What is your "go-to" activity when you need to relax or relieve stress?
- Can you "draw" your life right now? Use a pie chart to represent how your life looks right now (i.e.: family, school work, personal, social, leisure, professional life, etc.).
 - Does it seem right to you? How would you like your life to look? Why? How can you get there?
- How do you think IWU can help provide you with a sense of meaning and purpose in life?
- What types of activities (e.g. exercise, mindfulness, sleep) do you participate in to take care of your physical & mental health?
 - How do you prioritize those activities?
- Do you feel like you belong at IWU? Have you found faculty/staff/peers/group who you help give you a sense of belonging?

IWU:

- What are your goals for your time here at IWU?
- What types of experiences do you hope to have while you are at IWU?
 - Internships? Study Abroad? Research? Leadership? Campus Involvement? Community Involvement? Volunteer work?
- What RSOs or other student activities most excite you? What are you involved in?
- Are you choosing your extra-curricular activities wisely so you are not over-extended?
- What type of events (e.g. athletics, programs, events) do you attend or plan to attend?
 - How might attending these complement your academic plan?

- Is IWU what you expected it to be? If not, why not?
- What do you like or dislike about Bloomington-Normal?
- How do you find the climate here on campus? What would you change about it?
- What have you enjoyed the most about being at IWU? The least?
- What challenges have you had here? What and who are the resources that have helped you navigate those challenges?

Future:

- In four years, what do you want to be able to say about your experience at IWU?
- Where do you see yourself one year after you graduate from IWU? 5? 10?
- Do you plan to continue your education after IWU? If so, in what?
- If you have a declared major, what makes you want to pursue that major?
- How will your major choice provide for your future professional pursuits?
- How can we help prepare you for your intended post-graduation pursuits (e.g. graduate school, career)? What skills are needed to cultivate success?
- Have you explored summer opportunities (internship, study abroad, job) that helps you build research or resume experience?
 - If not, why not? If yes, what types of opportunities do you hope to pursue?
- Have you been to the Hart Career Center?
 - Are you familiar with the services provided by the Center?
 - If so, what did you learn? If not, what is stopping you?

Classes:

- What types of classes/subjects do you enjoy?
 - Why do you enjoy those classes? What makes you not enjoy others?
- If requirements weren't in place, what kinds of classes would you fill your schedule with?
- How might you manage your classes and other activities without overextending yourself?
- How will/do you organize and manage your time?
- What is your current grade in each class/what grades did you get on your most recent assignments/quizzes/tests?
 - Are you happy with those grades?
 - If not, what are you doing to improve them?
- What's the weirdest thing you've seen on your syllabus this semester? (Encourages them to actually look at them.)

Study Strategies:

- What is your biggest stumbling block as a student?
- Do you feel confident regarding your:
 - Study skills? Reading comprehension? Writing skills? Ability to solve quantitative problems?
- Do you consider yourself a procrastinator?
 - If so, what strategies do you have for getting started?
- How many hours per week do you spend studying?
- What time of day and where do you study?
- How do you keep track of, and prioritize, your coursework/activities (planner, apps)?
- What are the 3 most important items on your current "to-do" list?

Interacting with Faculty:

- Which faculty office hours have you been to?
 - What has caused you to go or not go to each?
- How can you make the most out of attending your faculty office hours?
- What do you wish more faculty realized about students?
- What is the hardest thing for you to share with your professors about you as a student? As a person?

GREAT ADVISORS TALK ABOUT GREAT ADVISING BY ELIZABETH WILCOX

Printed with permission from the author:

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Retrieved from: <https://advisingmatters.berkeley.edu/recognition/great-advisors-talk-about-great-advising>

The Givens

It goes without saying that all great advisors operate from a solid professional foundation. That foundation includes the following givens.

Great advisors are **knowledgeable** about the characteristics and needs of their students and **informed** about their respective programs as well as institutional mission, goals, requirements, policies, procedures, rules and regulations.

They are **accessible** to students – logistically and personally.

They are **accurate** and **timely** in their response to student needs.

They are **fair and seek to become aware of their biases**.

They are **ethical** in their practice.

They are able to effectively **refer** students to appropriate resources.

What Great Advisors Do

Beyond the givens, great advisors do the following:

Great advisors **see each student and every advising interaction as unique** and have the **ability to adapt** their style, strategies and methods depending on the student's needs and situation.

Great advising is based on a **relationship** between individuals. Advising is not something that is done to a student; at its best, it is a continuous, open, collaborative, authentic, honest, genuine, fluid, exchange between individuals. Vulnerability and kindness are core dispositions. Many advisors described this as an energy exchange – current flows from the advisor to the student and back again to the advisor – each learns from the other and is energized. Other descriptions of this exchange included use of a dance metaphor where the student is leading, and a tandem bike metaphor where both parties work in unison with doubled pedaling power.

Great advisors are **inclusive**. They seek to become aware of their biases and create inclusive, welcoming environments for students.

Great advisors see themselves as **advocates**. Advocacy can take many forms including going the extra mile for students, creating a welcoming and safe space, and helping students recognize their own strength and resilience. They help students navigate the University's complex systems and hierarchies and ultimately create a greater sense of agency and ability to self-advocate.

Great advisors are **connected to people, resources and ideas**. Advising is a complex **interdependent** activity and great advisors get and stay connected.

Great advisors are **expert listeners**, adept at **asking the right questions** and are **aware** of self and others. They are perceptive and they listen (without judgment) with their entire self to both verbal and non-verbal cues. Great advisors see things from the student's perspective, they have a unique capacity to **empathize and remain humble**.

Great advisors are creative and constantly **see opportunities for continuous improvement**. They often do not think they are great since they see greatness itself as an orientation toward never ending improvement.

What Great Advisors Know

Our greats identified one simple thing that all greats know:

Great advisors know that **change is constant** and that they **cannot know everything**. They admit this with grace and humor and constantly seek to discover what they do not know.

What Great Advisors Value

Great advisors **value learning, cultivate the potential for growth** in students and are themselves **curious and continuous learners**. The learning and growth that happens over time is often reciprocal with benefits to both the advisor and student.

Greats are **progress, success and completion** oriented. Many great advisors described the pride they take in seeing students reach important intellectual and personal milestones. They believe in *every* student's ability to succeed.

They **value feedback** on their performance. Greats seem to have an innate desire to know how they are doing and they look for and use formal and informal evaluation of their performance to adapt, modify and improve their practice.

Greats are **authentic. This quality is often described as the ability to be genuine, human, open, honest, and vulnerable**. Much emphasis is placed by greats on openness and vulnerability in the advising exchange. When students know and understand their advisors to be human beings, they themselves are more able to confide, connect, reflect, accept and grow.

Greats are often **creative, innovative, and fun loving**. The ability to think outside of the box is a source of constant pride as is the ability to use humor to reduce stress and leverage connection.

They value **teamwork**, collaboration, connectedness, networks, and professional partnerships and they leverage these to create support systems for themselves and their students. They see their success as tied to the successes of others.

What Great Advisors Produce

The critical benefits and outcomes of advising are well known; enhanced engagement, performance, learning, intra and interpersonal skills, greater connectedness, wellness and improved ability to retain, transition, persist and complete degree requirements. In addition, greats described the following additional benefits of great advising:

Greats enhance **learning, meaning making and help clarify purpose**. Much emphasis is put on open-ended questioning, reflection and synthesis as strategies for helping students better understand their interests, experiences, choices, progress and future goals.

They expand **opportunity, discovery and growth**. Great advisors use a magical formula of support and challenge that leads to new possibilities, options and opportunities for students.

Greats understand the University to be a place of complex hierarchies and they work to increase **agency**, confidence and the **ability to self-advocate**.

Great advising supports **identity development** and opportunities to reframe one's view of oneself and one's ability. It provides the "safe space" or "brave space" needed to explore multiple intersecting and emerging identities and core values.

Great advising increases **confidence**. Advisors often provide the much needed "you are as good and smart as everyone else" encouragement students need to persist.

Great advising has a **positive emotional impact** – students often feel less stressed, worried, anxious, insecure, alone, and confused. They leave great advising sessions feeling more positive, calm, uplifted and

empowered. In short, they feel cared for and affirmed. Students have greater awareness of and ability to manage a wide range of emotions; through trust and openness great advisors support emotional expression and create bridges to other critical support networks.

Great advising **creates and expands connections** – students are more connected to the institution, to their peers, to faculty, to resources and opportunities.

How Greats Get and Remain Great

Great advisors are **open to, welcome and seek out feedback** on their performance, especially from students.

They engage in on-going professional development activities both formal and informal; they make learning a priority.

Great advisors are **connected to others and to the advising community**. They see their work has highly interconnected and dependent on the strengths, knowledge and expertise of others.

Great advisors can often be found **helping and inspiring their colleagues**. By supporting others they deepen and extend their own abilities and practice.

Great advisors become and stay great by **surrounding themselves with greatness**. All greats mentioned another great advisor who mentored or inspired them and upon which they modeled their own practice.

They are **reflective** and able to **balance professional and personal responsibilities**. They have developed and employ a wide range of **self-care strategies** to ensure optimal performance. They know when and how to step away and recharge.