

The Importance of the Advisor/Advisee Relationship

Most advisors can quickly become at ease in helping students select courses; however, many advisors struggle with building the personal relationship that is important for effective advising. To be truly effective, you should be able to go beyond routine course scheduling to help students achieve their academic and career goals.

The questions you ask a student can be those that you use to seek information (closed-ended) and those that you use to build a relationship (open-ended). With regular use open-ended questions during advising, you'll find that advising and teaching are not dissimilar- they inherently have the same mission.

Some examples of questions used in advising:

Open	Closed
"Could you tell me a little about your English class?"	"Do you attend English class?"
"How do you feel about English class?"	"Do you like English class?"
"How do you feel about the time you spent on the test?"	"How long did it take you to finish the test?"

One very important aspect of successful academic advising is providing the student with personalized attention. Some simple methods for accomplishing this:

- Smile
- Refer to the student by first name
- Maintain an attitude of acceptance and respect

Another important (yet commonly overlooked) method to communicate interest in the student is non-verbal communication, or body language:

- Position yourself at an appropriate distance
- Face the student squarely
- Maintain comfortable eye contact

The most important element in effective advising is good listening skills. Advisors should use active listening to understand what the student is really saying:

- Pay attention to the student's non-verbal communication (tone of voice, posture, expression, eye contact)
- Wait for speaker to finish before responding
- Suspend judgment until you have heard the student
- Clear your mind of distractions
- Focus on the central idea -- don't get lost in details

It is also a good technique while listening to clarify what you believe the student is saying:

- Note the content of student's message and feelings: repeat back, making sure you have heard correctly
- Communicate understanding of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors from the student's frame of reference [Example: "How do you feel about the professor's comments in class?"]