
Letter From the Editor: Innovative Scholarship on Academic Advising

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When it was launched in 1999, *The Mentor* championed the idea that academic advisers would benefit from being active not only in consuming but also in producing scholarship relevant to their practice. Acknowledging the limited attention afforded to academic advising in traditional venues, *The Mentor* encouraged more scholarly activity by taking a fresh approach to peer-reviewed publication: From its founding, the journal has been open access, held no restrictions on article length, and kept an open perspective on research methodologies. Advising scholars of various backgrounds—including primary role advisors, faculty, and higher education administrators—answered this call. *The Mentor* flourished and contributed to the blossoming of literature on academic advising more broadly.

The journal is now re-launching with a new website and name change. *The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal* is now *The Mentor: Innovative Scholarship on Academic Advising*. This emphasis on innovative scholarship acknowledges the role the journal has played in the past and points to its future potential. In digressing in key ways from traditional publications, *The Mentor* has the ability to support scholarship that not only challenges existing thought, but can also introduce ideas and forms of analysis that are experimental or may even seem strange. It was in this spirit, for example, that Marc Lowenstein in his 1999 *Mentor* article critiqued developmental advising, the then dominant paradigm in the field, and proposed “academically centered advising” as an alternative. In 2011, Lowenstein published another article in *The Mentor* titled “Academic Advising at the University of Utopia,” elaborating upon his initial ideas by imagining and describing what a fully realized teaching and learning centered advising system might look like at a fictitious, idealized university.

The Mentor’s first article under its new name in some ways echoes Lowenstein’s past work. In “Philosopher-Kings and Academic Advisers: Learning from The Republic,” C.J. Venable also journeys into the imagination to wrestle with the meaning and value of academic advising. However, Venable’s thought experiment takes a novel approach, describing a fictitious dialogue between two modern-day academic advisers and the Classical Greek philosopher Plato. In doing so, the article dramatizes a deep reflection on advising practice and presents a model for intellectual dialogue among advisers.



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While Venable's article is rooted in philosophy, innovative scholarship can take many forms. Social science research has been an important part of *The Mentor's* publishing history. Just like philosophically oriented work, social science research could incorporate innovative analyses and writing styles. But also, in addition to providing new empirical findings, both large-scale quantitative analyses and small-sample case studies provide empirical evidence that can refute, amend, or extend existing explanatory theories and social scientific concepts. The advising literature is certainly richer for having had ideas introduced from various disciplines. However, rather than simply apply existing theories and concepts, the researcher could develop them in ways that make them particular to academic advising. Advising scholars might also amend social science ideas in ways that keep them broadly generalizable, thus demonstrating the importance of advising as an empirical context that can improve fundamental ideas in education, sociology, psychology, or other scholarly fields.

The Mentor welcomes submissions about academic advising and the constellation of theories and topics that inform its practice and intellectual development. What has come before and what has been highlighted in this letter should not limit the scholarship submitted to the journal. Diverse perspectives foster innovation. Thus, in the same spirit from which it began, we hope that academic advisers of all different backgrounds as well as scholars and practitioners from a variety of other fields will find *The Mentor* to be an inviting outlet for their ideas.

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