

## Experience Design as a Metaphor for Academic Advising: Response to Steele and White

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The language used to describe the work of academic advising impacts how the work is carried out and assessed. Steele and White (2019) discuss what academic advising is *not* (customer service). However, it is also important to develop language that frames what academic advising *is*. As they point out, “Academic advisers know where the trouble spots are” (p. 4), meaning that academic advisers may be aware of context and developmental concerns of students before anyone else is. By exploring a variety of appropriate metaphors that describe academic advising, it may be possible to recast the role of advisers along with the nature and impact of their work with students.

NACADA has promoted ‘advising as teaching’ as a viable metaphor to describe the work of academic advisers (Lowenstein, 2005). Another helpful metaphor may be academic advising as experience design. Experience design consists of the creation of intentional experiences that lead participants to discover meaning and bring about some positive outcome as defined by both the designer and the participant (Hassenzahl et al., 2013). These metaphors resist descriptions of academic advising work that focus on the transactional, while emphasizing transformational and developmental impacts. Additionally, using more transformational metaphors emphasizes student autonomy and responsibility in authoring their own personal narrative (Magolda, 2008).

Framing higher education in terms of customer service, products, and offerings may focus administrators too much on institutional goals, expectations, and philosophies while neglecting more developmental exploration of student possibilities. In other words, a strict focus on satisfaction and efficiencies (i.e., retaining students, low times to graduation, etc.) may obscure deeper purposes students have for attending the university—like finding and developing their interests, skills, and personal connections to other members of the collegiate community. In order to fully develop themselves, students may have to realize that they need to change, that they are not always right, and that they have to make sacrifices to achieve what they really want. Adopting an ‘academic advising as experience design’ metaphor suggests a partnership with students that is guided by student interest, engagement, and awareness. The outcomes of such a partnership could include a greater focus on experiential learning, pairing students with

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professionals for mentoring experiences, guided fieldwork to facilitate the development of professional judgment in students, and so forth. A focus on the student experience in addition to student outcomes may lead to accelerated growth and development of students, as such experiences foster greater engagement and reflection (Kuh, 2009). In like fashion, metaphors that describe the work of academic advising need to emphasize the role of experience, student autonomy, and decision making (Grites, 2013).

Proliferation of these developmental metaphors for advising can only take place in environments where all parties are exposed to the realities of the work being done by advisers (Steele & White, 2019). It may be helpful to invite administrators to observe advising sessions and to encourage students to share the value and impact of their advising experiences with the broader university community. Advisers can also promote the experiential pedagogy and curriculum of advising in meetings with campus partners and administrators, thus familiarizing a greater number of individuals with the true nature of their advising work. Only through collaborative partnerships and intentional efforts to build awareness can the language and discourse related to academic advising evolve in ways that accurately reflect the work that is done.

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