

Bradley University

Academic Advising  
Philosophy and Legal Issues

## **Role of Academic Advising at Bradley University**

The purpose of the Bradley University Academic Advising Handbook is to serve as a guide for faculty members concerning their role and responsibility as advisors and to provide information about procedures involving the advisor and referrals that the advisor should offer to students. Academic advising goes well beyond assisting students with their semester schedule of classes. The role of the academic advisor includes, but is not limited to:

1. Helping the student define career goals.
2. Referring the student to personal counseling when appropriate.
3. Encouraging awareness of cultural and social opportunities on campus.
4. Identifying courses and experiential learning opportunities that will help the student to achieve personal and professional goals.
5. Learning the policies and requirements for graduation and clearly communicating them to advisees so that they will not be deficient in any University, College, or Departmental requirements.

Initially students may be concerned only with their class schedules, but once a supportive and trusting relationship is established, conversations pertaining to career goals, opportunities on and off campus, and necessary referrals will very likely follow.

***“Academic advising is the responsibility of the faculty. It is central to the Bradley experience. The promise of meaningful interaction between a faculty advisor and a student is one of the reasons a student chooses to attend Bradley University. This positive relationship strengthens recruitment, retention, student satisfaction and placement.” This quote is from the Bradley University Faculty Handbook which is located on line at: <http://www.bradley.edu/academics/fachandbook/>***

“An academic advisor needs to know:

1. How the student feels about school.
2. How motivated the student is about studying.
3. How committed the student is to getting a degree.
4. What help the student wants or needs.
5. What motivational blocks may hinder the student’s progress.”

***The Role of Student Affairs, monograph, 1991.***

“Every candidate for a degree is personally responsible for meeting all requirements for graduation and no University official can relieve a student of this responsibility,” (Bradley University Undergraduate Catalog). The academic advisors should provide accurate and timely information to the student. This handbook will assist advisors in helping students with the necessary information.

## **Definition and Strategy for Academic Advising**

Bradley University's definition of advising is the embodiment of a relationship established between the student and advisor. "Academic advising is a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multifaceted, and the responsibility of both student and advisor. The advisor serves as a facilitator of communication, a coordinator of learning experiences through course and career planning and academic progress review, and an agent of referral to other campus agencies as necessary" (Crockett, p. 3).

Bradley University places emphasis on the recruitment and retention of its students. Academic advising is critical to the persistence of students because of the support and guidance Bradley faculty members provide to students as their academic advisors. Academic advising, effectively delivered, can be a powerful influence on student development and learning and as such, a potent retention force on the campus. Habley (1981) presents a particularly convincing case for an Advisement-Retention Model which underscores the critical link between academic advising and student retention. Based on the assumption that retention programs should focus on services which enable students to clarify their educational/career goals and relate those goals to academic offerings, quality advising provides the most significant mechanism through which this can be accomplished. Habley concludes that the advisor is critical in assisting students to explore goals and choose appropriate educational offerings consistent with those goals (Crockett, p. 167).

Two resources that may be of assistance to academic advisors or Bradley University students are:

- Mr. David Trillizio, Director  
Center for Orientation & Advisement  
Bradley Hall 239  
[dpt@bradley.edu](mailto:dpt@bradley.edu)  
(309) 677-2420
- Ms. Barbara Carraway, Interim Executive Director  
Center for Student Support Services  
Sisson Hall 101  
[bck@bradley.edu](mailto:bck@bradley.edu)  
(309) 677-3658
- Dr. Joyce Shotick, Executive Director  
Center for Student Development and Health Services  
Bradley Hall 239  
[jas@bradley.edu](mailto:jas@bradley.edu)  
(309) 677-2420

## Advising Goals

1. Assist students in self-understanding and self-acceptance (their values, abilities, interests, and limitations).
  - a. Refer to the *Center for Academic Transition and Assessment* Services  
<http://www.bradley.edu/eddev/testing/>
  - b. Refer to “Testing Services for Students”
2. Assist students in their consideration of life goals by relating interests, skills abilities, and values to career, the work environment, and the purpose of higher education.
  - a. Refer to the Academic Exploration Program  
<http://www.bradley.edu/eddev/aep/>
3. Assist students in developing an educational plan consistent with life goals and objectives (alternative courses of action and alternate career considerations).
  - a. Refer to the Smith Career Center  
<http://explore.bradley.edu/scc/>
4. Provide accurate information about institutional policies, procedures, resources, and programs.
  - a. Refer to the Dean’s Office and the Registrar’s Office  
<http://www.bradley.edu/registrar/>
  - b. Refer to the Undergraduate Catalog  
<http://www.bradley.edu/pubs/undergrad.html>
5. Make referrals to other Bradley University or community support services.
  - a. Refer to the Center for Student Support Services  
<http://www.bradley.edu/students/support/>
6. Provide information about students to the institution and/or academic departments.
  - a. Refer to FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)  
<http://www.bradley.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>
7. Assist students in evaluation of progress toward degree completion.
  - a. Refer to DARS (Degree Audit Requirement System)  
<http://acinqire>
8. Assist students in developing decision-making skills.

## Advising Tips

1. Create a receptive, confidential relationship with the advisee. When students believe that the advisor is truly providing guidance that will benefit them, the students will be more accepting, appreciative, and often act upon the recommendations offered by the advisor.
2. Advising is listening! If students can talk with someone in whom they have confidence, who won't laugh at their comments, ridicule their expressions, or be paternalistic or condescending, students may, within the discussion itself, discover various possibilities and perceive their situation from various perspectives. A good listener, being attentive and encouraging, may provide the student with a form of assistance that is truly helpful.
3. Be empathetic. Remember some of your own difficulties, frustrations, and complexities of college life and make an effort to reduce them for your advisee.
4. Establish the advantages and limitations of advising with each student. Explain how regular advising sessions can benefit the student. Be sure to ask the student if they have any questions.
5. Both the advisor and advisee have certain responsibilities. Discuss your expectations of the student as an advisee. A written list of those expectations would serve as a reminder to the student to prepare for his/her next meeting.
6. Clarify with your advisee that he/she understands your intended message. Ask the student to then describe back to you what he/she will do.
7. End-of-lecture summary has its counterpart in advising. During the advising session, and particularly at the end, summarize what transpired and the options that the student has. This is an opportunity for the student to respond to your advice.
8. Open-ended questions are a useful means of entering into a discussion. Students, particularly freshmen, may be intimidated by your faculty rank, and be hesitant to elaborate in their discussions with you.
9. You may have to inform a student that you are compelled to deny his/her request. When this must be done, be sure to specifically explain what you cannot do for the student and why.
10. Refer the student to a specific person and offer several alternatives. This handbook will provide you with a number of resources. If you are not sure where to refer a student, make a phone call to your department Chair and/or the Center for Orientation and Advisement.
11. Take good notes on what was discussed and what your recommendations to the student were and file them in the student's folder. This will serve as a reminder to you when you meet with the student in a follow up visit.
12. If an academic advisor is on sabbatical or is not able to meet with students due to other complications, the department chairperson should notify the advisees that their academic advisor is not available for the semester and the name of the interim advisor should be provided.

## Legal Issues

The academic advisor is on the "front line" of the university in dealing with students. It is a critical position, and the success or failure of the student's education and growth is influenced greatly by the advising function. In today's litigious atmosphere, the advising function is more critical than ever.

*Academic advising primarily occurs under the umbrella of academic affairs.* The courts have always hesitated to enter the academic arena and substitute their judgment for that of the academician. In doing so, they have recognized the academic freedom which protects academic decisions, including advising decisions. The increasing number of court decisions dealing with classroom and academic matters attests to the growing judicial sensitivity to students' rights in academic affairs.

An increasing emphasis on quality advising to enhance retention brings added responsibilities to the advisor. More and more, advisors not only are expected to understand such things as scheduling and registration procedures and degree requirements, but also they may be expected to function as a referral service or possibly as career counselors.

Most institutions' catalogs state that the ultimate responsibility for knowing degree requirements rests with the student. The Bradley University Undergraduate Catalog contains such statements. This type of statement normally would protect advisors if they commit an advising error. Generally, the advisor is not going to be held personally liable for erroneous advising in the absence of gross negligence, irresponsible behavior, or arbitrary or capricious treatment of the student.

Advisors should keep notes of their discussions with students during advising sessions. An accurate record of advising sessions would help solve any disputes over the content of previous advising and also serve as a legitimate protection against the claims of erroneous advising.

Due to a number of legislative acts that have been enacted, particularly the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), faculty and staff must be careful to limit the information that they provide to individuals. **Under no circumstances should anyone provide information about the specific whereabouts of a student or about the student's grades or other personally identifiable information to anyone without written permission from that student.** Please visit the Registrar's web site for more information and an interactive quiz to test your knowledge about FERPA at: <http://www.bradley.edu/registrar/ferpa/>