

UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ADVISING AND ITS RELATION TO DEGREE
COMPLETION TIME
HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between academic advising and degree completion time. Regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between academic advising behavioral style, student satisfaction with advising, number of advising sessions, and student status to degree completion time. Participants were students that applied to graduate in the 2009-2010 academic year from Humboldt State University ($N=232$). The Academic Advising Inventory was administered to participants, along with questions about student status, online through the website: <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. A significant correlation between student satisfaction ratings with academic advising and degree completion time was found. This study supports a link between academic advising and decreased degree completion time.

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CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

College Graduation

Four years has traditionally been the amount of time that a majority of people think it takes to graduate from college. Universities and junior colleges distinguish themselves as either two-year or four-year institutions. Many students assume that a degree can be completed in four years. Universities include models in their academic catalogs that describe a four-year graduation plan. Yet degree completion rates are not falling in line with the traditional view of the “four-year plan” according to trends in data shown in *Students Right To Know*, described below. Increasingly, students are taking more and more time to complete their undergraduate degrees.

Public Law 101-542, also called the Student Right to Know Act, has mandated universities to report their retention and degree completion rates to the U.S. Department of Education. This law has enabled anyone curious about degree completion rates to view the percentage of students graduating from the majority of the universities in the United States. Graduation and retention rates are available for students, parents, guidance counselors, and others to compare and contrast colleges of interest. Current trends show students requiring on average five to six years to complete their degree objectives based on data trends from PL 101-542.

There is an important consideration made in a study by Aston (2005) about analyzing degree completion rates. Aston reports that degree completion rates must be

interpreted through filters to accurately make interpretations about degree completion rates. Such filters include student standing when enrollment began at a university, number of units taken each semester and personal issues surrounding a student that cannot be captured by current statistics as PL 101-542. The study explains that information reported for the *Students Right to Know* is a snapshot of student cohorts.

Graduation rates are based on one particular student cohort. For the purposes of reporting statistics for PL 101-542, universities only include data from first-time freshman enrolled full time at a university. Full time enrollment is defined by many universities as being enrolled in at least 12 semester units. The assumption is that student cohorts examined by PL 101-542 are measured against the traditional four-year degree completion ideal. While many arguments can be made against PL 101-542 degree completion rate reporting, such as the difference between graduation rates for transfer students versus students who have only attended one university, state legislators still consider these statistics as the measure of institutional success.

There are many studies that examine a variety of topics that may be related to college graduation. In a study by Clarkson and Roscoe (1994), information was gathered for 461 alumni and 264 randomly selected students from a public university. Participants were asked about academic, financial, and personal factors present during their studies at the university. The study found that student characteristics, personal choice and institutional offerings were significantly related to degree completion time. The authors offer suggestions to consider that may affect degree completion time, including occasional updates and information from academic advisors, early advisement for new

students, and referrals to personal and academic advisors for students thinking about withdrawing from courses.

The level of student engagement in academics seems to play a role in degree completion time. In a study by Svanum and Bigatti (2009), the level of student engagement in class was explored for its role in timely degree completion. Participants were 219 undergraduate students enrolled in an Abnormal Psychology course. A questionnaire about academic course engagement was given to the participants. The questionnaire asked about the amount of time students participated in class, prepared for class, and attended class. Graduation time was tracked in terms of semesters since the participant finished the Abnormal Psychology course. The authors found that the more engaged the participants were in class, the faster the participant graduated from college. Once possible conclusion is that the more a student engages in academic concerns, including academic advising, the more aware they are of degree requirements and therefore likely to graduate faster.

Some research has also focused on the role of Psychological factors that may influence college graduation. Researchers Hall, Smith, and Chia (2008) explored cognitive and personality factors that related to timely degree completion. Participants were 202 college students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses at a southeastern university. Participants completed the Executive Process Questionnaire (Hall, 1994), Levenson's Locus of Control measure (Levenson, 1974), and Chia's Indirect Internal Locus of Control scale (Chia, Kohyama, Fang, Cheng & Chuang, 1999) to examine metacognitive behavior, perceived control and indirect control accordingly. The

authors found that students who completed their college degrees in a timely fashion had a high internal locus of control. While students' metacognitive processes did aid Grade Point Average, it did not predict a reduction in graduation time. Students who believed they personally controlled when they graduated from college tended to graduate sooner.

Developmental Academic Advising

Over the last forty years academic advising has seen many changes. While the goals of academic advising have not changed much, the delivery of academic advising and personnel giving advising have evolved. The topic of academic advising styles has received much attention. At the forefront of these discussions, Crookston (1972) has influenced much of the discussion about academic advising styles. Crookston describes a paradigm shift from traditional Prescriptive advising to Developmental advising. The author conceives Prescriptive advising as an authoritative relationship in which the advisor holds total control and responsibility of academic decisions. Crookston writes: "As implied by the term itself (Prescriptive advising), the relationship is obviously based on authority; the advisor is the doctor and the student is the patient" (p. 78).

Developmental advising, in contrast, is described as a mutual relationship between advisor and advisee where both parties are equally invested in a student's academic and social success. Crookston writes: "The most important of these (values) is the belief that the relationship itself is one in which the academic advisor and the student differentially engage in a series of developmental tasks, the successful completion of which results in various degrees of learning by both parties" (p. 79). Students are developing individuals

that need the opportunity to overcome challenges to grow as humans. As a result of this article, a wealth of publications about Developmental advising has dominated the field of academic advising.

In addition to Crookston's changing philosophy of academic advising, O'Banion (1972) describes a model of academic advising that is centered on the student. The author describes an academic advising model in which life goals are explored, followed by occupational goals, college major choice, course choices, and course scheduling. O'Banion explains that college is a place to explore student development. Students are ultimately responsible for movement in the process. Academic advising is influenced by the educational philosophy of the institution. In a study by Frost (1993), 37 faculty members identified as Developmental academic advisors from a previous study were examined to identify their qualities during academic advising. Qualities of academic advisors were measured with the Academic Advisor Inventory (AAI), which looks at the extent to which the academic advisor engaged in Developmental academic advising practices. Further review of the AAI is discussed in the Methods section of this paper. Some of these practices included asking about students current academic concerns, potential career goals, and personal interests. The author found that Developmental academic advisors involve their advisees in college experiences, explore factors that lead to student success, and show interest in student academic success. Frost further concludes that the relationship should primarily focus on academic concerns.

Academic advising is constantly in the process of change. Jordan (2000) discusses possible directions that academic advising can take in the 21st century. The author

discusses combining developmental aspects of academic advising and the technological advances of the present. Jordan insists that academic advisors conceptualize their advisees as developing humans. Academic advising should still involve a holistic approach, using as many resources as possible to help the student. Recommendations are made about expanding the use of communication, such as e-mail, video conferencing, and degree reports to supplement academic advising. The development of new technologies is not the end of Developmental academic advising, but an opportunity to expand the amount of interaction possible between the advisor and advisee.

Students Wants and Satisfaction

When research is done on academic advising, student input is an important consideration in development and policy. Students directly need and benefit from academic advising. The rigors for degree and major requirements would be difficult to manage without the use of academic advising. Students can let advisors know what they need from academic advising and how satisfied they are with the process.

In an influential study by Winston and Sandor (1984), students were asked to identify what they wanted from academic advising. Participants were 306 undergraduates at the University of Georgia. The authors developed the Academic Advising Inventory to measure participants' views of academic advising. The AAI is an assessment tool that is constructed out of five sections (See Appendix B):

1. Developmental-Prescriptive Advising
2. Advisor-Advisee Activity Scales
3. Satisfaction with Advising
4. Demographic Information

5. Ideal Academic Advising

Winston and Sandor found a significant majority of participants preferred Developmental academic advising. Students wish to be considered partners in the advising process and believed advisor and advisee roles should be agreed upon at the beginning of the relationship.

In line with Developmental advising research, Coll (2008) provides insight on worldviews and academic advising satisfaction. His study examined 191 “traditional aged” college students, ages 18-23, at the University of Southern California. Participants took the World Assumption Scale (Janoff-Bulman, 1992) and the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1984). The World Assumption Scale is used to assess individuals’ world views based on self-worth, benevolence, and meaningfulness. Coll found whatever participants’ world views are, their satisfaction with academic advising was positively related to the Developmental style of advising. Student satisfaction with academic advising can therefore transcend differing world views if a developmental approach is taken to advising.

Information about student preferences during academic advising can be a beneficial aid to the university. Jeschke, Johnson, and Williams (2001) examined student preferences about academic advising styles. The authors explored satisfaction levels of students receiving Intrusive and Prescriptive academic advising. Intrusive academic advising is similar to Developmental academic advising. The important difference between the two advising styles is Intrusive academic advisors contact their advisees with progress reports regularly throughout the school year. Academic advisors send this

information automatically, even if the advisees did not request it themselves.

Participants in the study were 126 Psychology students at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI) during academic years 1998-99 to 2000-01.

Participants were administered the Psychology Student Profile Questionnaire (Jeschke, Johnson & Williams, 2001), developed for their study. The Psychology Student Profile Questionnaire collects demographic information as well as financial and parental information. Students were also asked to rate the satisfaction of their academic advising. The author found that generally, students prefer Intrusive academic advising significantly more than Prescriptive academic advising. Students receiving Intrusive academic advising also report feeling more connected with the Psychology department than those receiving Prescriptive academic advising.

In a study by Weir, Dickman, and Fuqua (2005), students were asked about their preferences in academic advising styles. The authors studied 187 upper-division students in the College of Arts and Sciences at a southwestern university. Upper-division students are students that have completed at least 60 semester or 90 quarter units of coursework. Two parts of the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1984) were given to measure student satisfaction and ideal advising. Weir et al. found that preferred Developmental and Prescriptive advising styles in part V can be split in order to ask about both preferred Developmental and Prescriptive academic styles. The conclusion was that if students were allowed to answer questions about both Developmental and Prescriptive advising preferences, a better detailed image could be gained about what

students want during academic advising. This finding calls for further study on the needs of Developmental and Prescriptive advising styles given specific advising topics.

Many students have a preferred method for how they want to be advised. Sometimes that method is not the one used during their academic advising. In a study by Hale, Graham, and Johnson (2009), congruence between preferred and ideal academic advising were studied in relation to satisfaction with current advising. Participants were 429 undergraduates from the College of Agricultural, Food and Life Science in a mid-south Ph. D. granting university. Participants were given the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1984), parts I, III, IV, and V. Authors found that students whose academic advising differed from their ideal version of academic advising were significantly less satisfied with academic advising than participants with matching views of academic advising. Most students in the study preferred Developmental academic advising, as measured in part V of the Academic Advising Inventory. The authors suggest that student satisfaction with academic advising should be monitored for retention and graduation.

In a study by Smith and Allen (2006), essential role constructs in academic advising were measured using the Inventory of Academic Advising Functions (IAAF). The authors developed five constructs considered during academic advising. The five constructs designed are Integration, Referral, Information, Individuation, and Shared Responsibility. Integration refers to how connected one is to the university, academic advisors and peers. Referrals have to do with resources available on campus to answer questions unknown to the advisor. Information is concerned with academic policy,

general education, and major requirements. Individuation is about the space and freedom that exists between advisor and advisee. Finally, Responsibility has to do with roles and responsibility assigned in advisor-advisee relationships. Participants were 2,193 undergraduates at an urban Ph.D. granting university. Participants completed the IAAF, which measures the importance of the five constructs described above. The authors found that personal variables largely influence what is considered important for academic advising. They also found that the importance of academic advising is a function of one's satisfaction with advising. The more important a participant found academic advising, the more satisfied they were with advising.

In a study of what students want from advising policy, Mottarella, Fritzsche, and Cerabino (2004) explored personality traits and academic advising style. The authors measured 468 students enrolled in Psychology courses at a southeastern university. The Academic Advising Inventory, the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and an academic policy survey were given to all participants. The NEO-FFI is a measure of the five basic personality traits: Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion. Results show that participants who reported receiving Developmental academic advising also tended to be happy and extraverted. The depth of advisor-advisee relationship was found to be the most important factor in the academic advising relationship. Participants that showed an established connection with academic advisors reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with academic advising.

Another study by Allen and Smith (2008) examined students and faculty perceptions of the importance of academic advising functions. The study enlisted 171

faculty members and 733 students at an urban Ph. D. granting university. The Inventory of Academic Advising Functions (Smith & Allen, 2006) was used in the study. The measurement was adapted for students and faculty. The faculty version asked about the level of agreement for the statements included in the inventory. Allen and Smith found that both students and faculty agree that information is essential to academic advising. Yet, there is a difference in the importance of academic policy and responsibility between students and faculty. Results also show college faculty feels low levels of responsibility for giving academic policy information to advisees. There is also a discrepancy between students and faculty when focusing on integration. Integration in this study related to the level of commitment students' felt for the university and faculty. Students want to be known by their academic advisors, but faculty does not rate integration as important in advising. A disconnect between advisor and advisee may lead to academic difficulty for students.

Summary

Over the last forty years, there have been many developments in academic advising. There was a paradigm shift to Developmental academic advising from traditional Prescriptive academic advising (Crookston, 1972). Many instruments have been created to measure academic advising, such as the Inventory of Academic Advising Function (Smith & Allen, 2006) and the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1984). The need to explore academic advising is evident in the current economic crisis, as it is becoming more expensive to pay for college and reduce

educational debts. Academic advising is an avenue to facilitate degree completion that has not received much attention.

There are limitations in the exploration of academic advising. Most studies focus on the retention of students, but do not continue to report its effectiveness on graduation rates. Few studies have explored the role of transfer students in academic advising, making generalizing findings difficult for all populations of students. This study aims to fill these gaps exploring the relationship between academic advising and degree completion time.

CHAPTER 2

Research Hypothesis

This study compared the responses of undergraduate seniors scheduled to graduate from Humboldt State University for the academic calendar year 2009-10. The instrument used was the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1984) (See Appendix B).

There are three hypotheses for this study:

1. Participants that are satisfied with advising will need less time to graduate than unsatisfied participants.
2. Participants that report Developmental academic advising will graduate sooner than participants receiving Prescriptive academic advising.
3. Participants who meet with advisors more than twice will graduate faster (in years).

CHAPTER 3

Methods

This study examined the role of academic advising as it relates to degree completion time. Academic advising was measured by student rating of behavioral style of advising sessions, the quantity of advising sessions the student had during the academic year, and student satisfaction ratings about academic advising received during the year.

Participants

Participants in this study were 232 undergraduates with senior-student standing who had applied to graduate for the academic calendar year 2009-10 at Humboldt State University. Students were considered seniors once they had completed 90 semester units of coursework. The Office of the Registrar identified the participation pool for the current study and provided contact information. Only students scheduled to earn their first bachelor's degree were used in this study. Verbal permission to gather the participation pool and contact information was provided by the University Registrar. Power was determined before the study in order to demonstrate that any findings would be statistically meaningful. Power was determined via chart reported by Cohen (1992). Effect size and alpha desired for the study were considered to produce an appropriate sample size. For a medium effect size of .80 and α of .05, a sample size of at least 120 participants were required (Cohen).

Measurement

Participants were asked to complete the Academic Advising Inventory (Winston & Sandor, 1986) parts I and III. Permission to use and modify the Academic Advising Inventory was granted by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). NACADA grants its members permission to use and modify the AAI for academic research per message on their website. As a member of NACADA, the author of this study has permission to use the AAI. NACADA granted permission to use part I in its entirety and modify part III to meet the needs of the current study. Part I of the AAI was used in the current study because it measures the behavioral style of academic advising. Behavioral styles of academic advising were classified as either Developmental or Prescriptive. The spectrum between Developmental and Prescriptive advising styles captures techniques and information that comprise academic advising. Part III of the AAI was used because it asks about participant satisfaction with their academic advising. Part IV of the AAI was not used because demographic information is collected after completion of the inventory. Part II of the AAI was not used because it measures characteristics of academic advising that are too specific for the goal of the current study.

The Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) is used to measure the process and outcomes of academic advising through a theoretically grounded approach. The AAI was developed by identifying differences in academic advising behavioral styles. Crookston (1972) identified two behavioral styles that occur in academic advising: Developmental and Prescriptive. The Developmental advising style focuses on student aspirations,

motivation, and skill level. Developmental advising is based on a close student-advisor relationship which is intended to aid achievement of academic, career, and personal goals (Crookston, 1972). Students are encouraged to be proactive about academic success.

In contrast, Prescriptive advising style is characterized by an authoritative relationship between advisor and advisee. Students follow directives from advisors about specific issues that are current to the student's academic situation. Prescriptive advising style is primarily focused on completion of requirements set for the student.

Part I of the AAI measures the two behavioral styles of academic advising. Academic advising styles are determined through student response to statements on either end of the Developmental-Prescriptive advising spectrum. Responses on the AAI are scored on an 8-point Likert-type scale. First, participants are asked to choose between pairs of statements that most accurately describe their academic advising. One of the statements is consistent with Developmental advising style while the other consistent with Prescriptive advising style. Finally, participants decide how accurate the chosen statement is about their current advising situation. Accuracy of the chosen statement is done by marking how true the response is on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Results will determine if academic advising for the participant is Developmental or Prescriptive in style. Two examples of these inventory statements are (see Appendix B):

4) My advisor shows an interest in my outside-of-class activities and suggests activities.

A-----B-----C-----D
 very slightly
 true true

OR My advisor does not know what I do outside of class.

E-----F-----G-----H
 slightly very
 true true

11) My advisor suggests what I should major in.

A-----B-----C-----D
 very slightly
 true true

OR My advisor suggest steps I can take to help decide my major.

E-----F-----G-----H
 slightly very
 true true

Scoring statement pairs is done by assigning each letter a numerical value, starting with A=8, B=7, and so on until H=1. Inventory statements 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14 are reverse coded. The possible range of scores on part I of the AAI is 14-112. Scores of 57-112 reflect Developmental advising styles while scores of 14-56 reflect Prescriptive advising styles.

Part III of the AAI asks about satisfaction with academic advising. Five statements each were geared towards personal satisfaction, accurate information given, and availability of academic advising. This section is scored by evaluating each statement and marking whether one strongly agrees, agrees, disagrees or strongly disagrees and then calculating the mean score of the five questions (see Appendix B)

Following this section is a list of questions about the participants' college attendance. Participants were asked about the length of college attendance, transfer status if a community or junior college was attended, and level of importance the participant attributes academic advising to graduating in the academic calendar year 2009-10.

Participants' student status was determined by the number of units completed at another

university or college. For this study, transfer students are students who have completed more than thirty semester units at other universities or colleges.

Procedures

Participants were contacted about the current study via e-mail. This communication contained a message asking the student to participate in a study that aims to identify effective means of decreasing the years needed to complete a college degree. This letter contained an internet link that directed the participant to a consent form, demographic information, and part I and III of the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). (see Appendix A and B)

Participants were asked to read a consent form informing them of their rights during research (See Appendix A). Participation in the study is anonymous, as the survey did not ask for identifiable information. The consent form read that participants must be 18 years or older to participate in the current study. Participation was entirely voluntary and it could be declined or withdrawn at any time without consequence. A statement about the goal of the study was included in the body of the consent form. The length of time needed to complete the inventory was approximately five minutes. There was minimal risk in the study. It was assumed that answering questions about the behavioral style of a students' academic advising did not pose greater discomfort for participants than discomfort experienced in daily life. Since participants were current students at Humboldt State University, academic advising was a routine portion of their lives as students. Contact information for the author was included in the consent in case questions

arose from participation in the study. Participants were asked if they understand the consent form and were directed to an additional page with a button to accept or decline participation in the current study (see Appendix A).

Students took the AAI via an online survey created through Survey Monkey. Participants indicated their responses via mouse click for demographic information and part I and III of the AAI. Participants also answered questions about their student status and class standing. Finally, there was an open-ended section where students could leave their comments about advising and degree completion time. Permission to administer the AAI to the participation pool was granted by the University Registrar and the Institutional Research Board (See Appendix C). Once the AAI and questions about the length of college attendance was been completed by participants, a message thanking them for their responses was included at the end of the inventory.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Demographics

A total of 234 participants responded to the online survey. Two participants were excluded from the study because they identified themselves as second bachelor candidates. The remaining 232 participant responses were used in the statistical analysis. Of the 232 participants, 60 (25.9%) identified as male, 171 (73.7%) identified as female, and 1 (.4%) identified as transgendered. A majority of the sample identified themselves as White/Caucasian ($n=166$, 71.6%), followed by Hispanic American/Latino/a ($n=18$, 7.8%), Bicultural/Multicultural ($n=16$, 6.9%), Others ($n=14$, 6%), Asian American or Pacific Islander ($n=11$, 4.7%), African American/Black ($n=4$, 1.7%), and Native American ($n=3$, 1.3%). A majority of participants fell within the 18-23 age range ($n=129$, 55.6%), followed by the 24-29 range ($n=72$, 31%), 30-35 range ($n=16$, 6.9%), and 36+ range ($n=15$, 6.5%) (See Table 1).

Participants were also asked for academic demographics. Academic demographics include student status, semesters at graduating institution, average number of advising sessions, and years to degree completion. Student status refers to the number of units completed at the time of initial enrollment to Humboldt State University. The three categories established by Enrollment Management at Humboldt State University are first-time freshmen (FTF), lower division transfers (LDT), and upper-division transfers (UDT). FTF's have not completed college coursework after high school graduation,

Table 1

Participant Demographics (N=232)

Demographics	Participants (<i>n</i>)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	60	25.9
Female	141	73.7
Transgender	1	.4
Race		
White/Caucasian	166	71.6
Hispanic American/Latino/a	18	7.8
Bicultural/Multicultural	16	6.9
Others	14	6
Asian American	11	4.7
African American/Black	4	1.7
Native American	3	1.3
Age		
18-23	129	55.6
24-29	72	31
30-35	16	6.9
36+	15	6.5

LDT's have completed between 1-59 semester units at other colleges or universities, and UDT's have completed 60 or more units at other colleges or universities. First-time freshmen for this study began their college education at Humboldt State University. In the pool of participants that responded to the study, 96 (41.4%) identified themselves as UDT, followed by 73 LDT participants (31.5%), and finally 63 FTF (27.2%) (See Table 2).

Participants reported needing 5.26 years to graduate on average ($SD=1.09$ years). A plurality of participants report meeting with their academic advisors one time per semester (40.5%). (See Table 3)

Academic Advising Inventory

Scores for quality of advising and satisfaction with advising were taken from parts I and III of the Academic Advising Inventory. The range of scores from part I are 14-112 and range of part III are 5-20. Scores for part III are further transformed into mean scores with a range of 1-4. Developmental academic advising was the most prevalent advising style in the study ($M=71.47$, $SD=19.54$). Of all participants, 165 rated their advising as Developmental in nature. The cut-off score for satisfying advising from part III is a mean of 2 as stated in the AAI manual. The mean score for advising satisfaction was 2.89 ($SD=.69$). (See Table 3)

*Table 2**Educational Demographics (N=232)*

Student Standing	Participants (N)	Percentage (%)
First-Time Freshmen	63	27.2
Lower-Division Transfer	73	31.5
Upper-Division Transfer	96	41.4

Table 3

Model Predicting Degree Completion Time from Student Status, Advising Satisfaction, Quality of Advising, and Number of Advising Sessions

Predictor	Range	M(SD)	R ²	R ² Δ	β
Student Status **	1-3	N/A	.147	.147*	
				.46*	
Advising Satisfaction	1-4	2.89 (.69)	.166	.019*	-.14*
Quality of Advising	14-112	71.47 (19.54)	.167	.001	.04
Advising Sessions	1-6	2.88 (1.28)	.169	.002	.04

Note. * $p < .05$. $N = 232$

** Student status variable was “dummy” coded for statistical analysis

Hierarchical Multiple Regression

An examination of student status, satisfaction with advising, quality of academic advising, and number of advising sessions as they related to degree completion time was accomplished using hierarchical multiple regression. Results show an overall correlation between degree completion time, student status, satisfaction with advising, quality of advising, and number of advising sessions, $R^2 = .169$, $F(5, 226) = 11.525$, $p < .001$.

Data from the student satisfaction variable was “dummy coded” due to its categorical nature. Dummy coding is used to analyze categorical information that normally does not provide meaningful statistical conclusions. By transforming these data, meaningful information about student status was computed to compare to the rest of the data set.

Upon further examination of the data, student status and satisfaction with advising were identified as significant contributors to the overall correlation between the four dependent variables and degree completion time. Student status was added as the first model of analysis. Student status had a significant correlation to degree completion time, $R^2 = .147$, $F(2, 229) = 19.77$, $p < .001$. The addition of satisfaction with advising to the first model also produced a significant variance, $R^2 = .166$, $F(1, 228) = 5.216$, $p < .05$. The addition of quality of academic advising and number of advising sessions in the following two models did not produce significant changes in R^2 .

The significance of the results was measured with Beta scores (β). Student status and satisfaction with advising were determined to provide significant variance to the overall correlation between dependent variables and degree completion time. Student

status the strongest significant predictor of degree completion time, $\beta = .46$. Satisfaction with advising is also a significant predictor of degree completion time, $\beta = -.14$. The quality of advising and number of advising sessions produce Betas of .04. (See Table 3)

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This study examined the role of academic advising as it relates to graduation. Specifically, the study investigated if academic advising decreased the number of years needed to graduate with a bachelor's degree. These findings show that academic advising does play a role in degree completion time. The relationship between satisfaction with academic advising and degree completion time were shown to be statistically significant.

The main purpose for this study was to see how academic advising affected the number of years needed to complete a bachelor's degree. Student status was included as a variable of interest in order to account for differences in the number of units completed at the time enrollment began at HSU. Once this variable was taken into account, focus was directed to the quality, quantity, and satisfaction rating of academic advising. The hypothesis about student satisfaction with advising and degree completion time was supported by this study. This study showed that satisfaction with academic advising ratings was significantly related to degree completion time. The higher the participant rated their satisfaction with academic advising, the less time, was required to complete a bachelor's degree. Hypotheses about the quality and quantity of academic advising were not supported by this study. The style of academic advising or the number of advising sessions did not reveal meaningful relationships to degree completion time.

Student status provided the best predictor of number of years to earn a bachelor's degree. Satisfaction with advising was shown to be statistically significant, though it is not as strong of a predictor of degree completion time ($\beta = -.14$) as student status ($\beta = .46$). Quality and quantity of academic advising do not provide meaningful changes to degree completion time ($\beta = .04$ for both variables).

Results of this study support findings by Mottarella et al. (2004). Authors in that study report depth of the advising relationship as the most important factor in an academic advising relationship. They go on to say that the style in which academic advising is presented is not important in the advising relationship. The accuracy of a message given during advising sessions are more important than the method which an advisor delivers information.

Findings in the current study suggest that satisfaction with advising is related to degree completion time. This conclusion supports Hale et. al. (2009) recommendation to monitor satisfaction rates to improve retention and graduation rates. Researchers in that study proposed student satisfaction as a major contributor to student integration to the university. They reason that students who rated their advising as satisfying would complete their degrees at their current university.

These findings may suggest increased emphasis in the relationship between academic advisor and advisee. While results of this study show the type of academic advising and number of advising sessions are not significant to degree completion time, there is promise when examining the interaction between advising relationship and college graduation. This finding supports Crookston's (1972) belief that the advising

relationship is an important factor to student success. This study shows a need to encourage effort from both students and academic advisors to forge a meaningful working relationship. The type of advising style is not as meaningful to the relationship as long as student satisfaction is a focus of advisee-advisor interactions.

The relationship between an academic advisor and their advisees is central to the results of this study. Students who have a satisfying relationship with their academic advisor are more likely to graduate faster than students with an unsatisfying relationship. Academic advising should receive attention as universities study options to increase graduation rates. Satisfying advising relationships can help students feel integrated to the university, which can help students' earn degrees in a shorter amount of time. Thus, academic advising is essential to the livelihood of successful universities.

Suggestion for Future Research

This study focused on the role of academic advising and its impact on degree completion time. It should be noted that while there a wealth of research about academic advising, research on degree completion is lacking in volume. An emphasis should be placed on research directly related to factors that may improve degree completion rates. Degree completion rate research is an area of study that is not well represented in research about higher education.

Satisfaction with academic advising was shown to be related to the time needed to graduate from a four-year college. This conclusion provides an interesting avenue of further study. One topic of interest for further study may focus on the match between

advisors and advisees. Since student satisfaction with advising is a result of advisor-advisee contact, it may be beneficial to explore what makes a productive advising match. Factors for future research may include age, gender, and race between the advisor and the advisee.

Another suggestion for further research should involve personal factors that may influence degree completion rates. Variables of interest in this line of research may include financial hardship, marital status, presence of family, and personal illness. As presented later in this discussion, academic factors are not the only factor that affects the time needed to complete a degree. It may be interesting to evaluate personal factors as they relate to degree completion time.

Examination comparing academic advising provided to undergraduates and graduates may be an interesting topic for further research. The current study focused on undergraduate students that had not earned a bachelor's degree. It may be interesting to study the effects of academic advising for undergraduate and graduates as it relates to their degree completion time. There may be a difference in the way these groups of students view academic advising. Those differences may shed light on the significance between academic advising at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The study was focused on academic advising and student status as the only variables on degree completion time. There are many variables that affect the rate at which students complete their college degrees. Many student responses were about personal difficulties, changing life events, finances, etc. that

affected time needed to complete a college degree. Another difficulty is using participants that had not yet had their degree awarded. Some participants may not have completed all of their degree requirements, which would increase the amount of degree completion time. Finally, the sample used in this study was largely homogeneous. A majority of participants were Caucasian females, while less than 30% of participants were minorities. The relationship found would not be generalized to diverse college population.

Conclusion

This study is a stepping stone to further research on the relationship between advisors and advisees. It is a hope that universities allocate funding to advising so more opportunities to match competent advisors to students can be achieved. If this is truly the goal of successful bachelor-awarding institutions, academic advising cannot be seen as a secondary responsibility of college educators.

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APPENDIX A

Humboldt State University Academic Advising and Graduation

Informed Consent Form

I agree to let Christian Guillén carry out the following survey on me for experimental purposes.

This is a survey of your academic advising. This survey should take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. **If you are not 18 years of age or older, please stop here and do not proceed with the survey.** Participants are asked to complete the entire survey. Items are mostly multiple choice with some fill-ins for answers. The survey does not pose any risk and/or discomfort. There are no benefits or risks associated with participation.

This survey is available through Survey Monkey after October 15, 2009. **All responses are anonymous.** In an effort to protect your identity, please do not attempt to leave identifying information on the survey.

I understand that he will answer any questions I may have concerning this investigation or the procedures at any time. **I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may decline to enter this study or may withdraw from it at any time without jeopardy.** Surveys will not have a name or other identifying feature attached to it. Surveys are protected by safety protocols from Survey Monkey while research is conducted. Surveys will be kept in a locked file cabinet while analysis is conducted. Surveys will be destroyed after one year of submission.

Completion of this survey implies consent for participation. If you have any questions concerning the investigation or procedures at any time you may contact:

Primary Investigator: Christian Guillén, (707) 826-6231, cg36@humboldt.edu; Thesis advisor: James Dupree, Ph.D.: (707) 826-3679, jld3@humboldt.edu; and Graduate Studies Dean: John Lyon, Ph.D.: (707) 826-3949, john.lyon@humboldt.edu.

Thank you for your participation!

Do you agree to participate in this study?

- YES
- NO

APPENDIX B

Academic Advising Inventory

Roger B. Winston, Jr. and Janet A. Sandor
Modified for use at Humboldt State University

Part I

Part I of this Inventory concerns how you and your advisor approach academic advising. Even if you have had more than one advisor or have been in more than one type of advising situation, please respond to the statements in terms of your **overall impressions of academic advising**.

There are 14 pairs of statements in Part I. You must make two decisions about each pair in order to respond: (1) decide which one of the two statements most accurately describes the academic advising you received, and then (2) decide how accurate or true that statement is (from *very true* to *slightly true*).

Example

80) My advisor plans my schedule	OR	My advisor and I plan my schedule together
A-----B-----C-----D		E-----F-----G-----H
very		slightly
true		true
		very
		true

Response:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
					X			

1) My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find courses and programs for myself.	OR	My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs.
A-----B-----C-----D		E-----F-----G-----H
very		slightly
true		true
		very
		true

2) My advisor tells me what would be the best schedule for me.	OR	My advisor suggests important considerations in planning a schedule and then gives me responsibility for
--	----	--

14) My advisor keeps me informed of my academic progress by examining my files and grades *only*.

A-----B-----C-----D
 very slightly
 true true

OR My advisor keeps me informed of my academic progress by examining my files and grades and by talking to me about my classes.

E-----F-----G-----H
 slightly true very true

Part III

Consider the academic advising you have participated in at this college. Please respond to the following five statements using the code below:

A = Strongly Disagree

C = Agree

B = Disagree

D = Strongly Agree

- 15) I am satisfied in general with the academic advising I have received.
 16) I have received accurate information about courses, programs, and requirements through academic advising.
 17) Sufficient prior notice has been provided about deadlines related to institutional policies and procedures.
 18) Advising has been available when I needed it.
 19) Sufficient time has been available during advising sessions.

The following question is not part of the Academic Advising Inventory, but critical for the current study. Please answer the following question:

1. How many years have you attended college? (College is junior college, community college and any universities)

- (a) 4 or less years (b) 5 years (c) 6 years (d) 7+ years

2. If applicable, how many units did you transfer from other colleges?

- (a) 29 or less units (b) 30-59 units (c) 60-89 units (d) 90+ units

3. This was my student standing when I first enrolled at Humboldt State University

- (a) freshman (b) sophomore (c) junior (d) senior

4. How many semesters have you attended Humboldt State University?

5. Please note how important academic advising has been in helping you graduate in the 2009-2010 academic year.

- A. Not important at all B. Not Important C. Neutral
D. Important E. Very Important

6. *Optional: Did the type of advising you had speed up or slow down the time you needed to graduate? Please explain.

Demographic Information

Please respond to the following questions.

What is your Gender?

- (a) male (c) transgender
(b) female (d) intersex

What is your cultural/racial background?

- (a) African American/Black (d) Native American
(b) Hispanic American/Latino/a (e) White/Caucasian
(c) Asian America or Pacific Islander (f) Biracial/Multicultural
(g) Other

What was your age at your last birthday?

- (a) 18-23 (c) 30-35
(b) 24-29 (9) 35+

How many academic advising sessions **on average** did you have during the semester?

- (a) none (d) three
(b) one (e) four
(c) two (f) five or more
-

APPENDIX C

IRB letter

Email Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2009 12:41:49 PM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific

Subject: Your IRB Proposal

I am writing to inform you that your IRB proposal entitled “Undergraduate Academic Advising and its Relation to Degree Completion Time” has been approved. Your approval number for this proposal is 09-14.

Your approval is valid for one calendar year and will expire on 10/14/10. Should you need to renew your proposal past this deadline, please alert us well prior to this date to avoid any delays in your research.

The official copy of your acceptance memo is being sent to James Dupree.

Sincerely,
Amanda
Office of Research and Graduate Studies
Humboldt State University