Academic Advising Approaches: Strategies that teach students to make the most of college

Chapter 9a - Voices from the Field: Increasing first-year student engagement through mid-year self-reflections

Reader Learning Outcomes and assessment activities

Readers will:

- Identify the best method for prompting and gathering student mid-year reflections.

  **Activity:** Break into small groups of advisors and, if possible, administrators, to brainstorm the best possible methods of prompting mid-year reflections and for gathering those reflections in a timely manner at your particular institution. A short questionnaire given to students as they wait to see their advisor and/or an e-portfolio prompt that may be submitted at the end of the first semester are two of many options. Gather the small groups together to discuss your ideas. Once the two or three best methods are identified by the entire group, make a list of the pros and cons of each and choose one to develop.

  **Assessment:** A method of prompting and gathering student mid-year reflections that fits the requirements of the institution will be chosen to be developed.

- Identify the mid-year questions that will be most useful for the students you advise.

  **Activity:** Break into small groups of advisors and review the questions suggested in “Increasing First-Year Student Engagement through Mid-Year Self-Reflections.” Then brainstorm and write five to ten questions that best fit your student population. These questions may be aligned with your learning outcomes, but they should meet specific goals, such as building resilience by reminding students of the difficulties they are already working through. For example, if you work with international students, you may want a question about what they have found most baffling about American culture and how they have dealt with it to this point. If you work with many commuter students you might want to ask them to list the top three things that have most helped them find their place at your institution (a club they joined, a class they have taken, or a conversation with a faculty member, for example). You may want a question that prompts them to think about how satisfied they are with advising to this point, such as “Thinking about your initial expectations about advising, in what ways have those expectations been met or not?” The main point is to write clear, short questions with a purpose in mind that will improve your work with the students in your institution. Bring the groups of advisors together to compare questions and their goals and agree on a short list.

  **Assessment:** A short list of mid-year prompts will be developed that fit the needs of the students.

- Develop the skills and resources that you need to assist you when talking with the students about their responses to the mid-year reflection questions.

  **Activity:** Break the advisors into groups to discuss the goals of each question on the mid-year reflection (a sense of belonging, resilience, the level of attachment to the intended major, study skill development, and advising satisfaction, for example). After the goal of each question is determined, list the skills and resources needed to be ready to fruitfully respond to the students’ answers. Gather the advisor groups together and make a list of the training needed as well as the information and other resources needed to fully respond to the students’ needs as they are likely to be revealed by the mid-year questions.

  **Assessment:** Advisors will be able to plan training, development, and resource needs that correspond to student needs as they are likely be revealed in the mid-year assessments.