**Chapter 4 - Theory Matters**

**Reader Learning Outcomes**

Readers will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the how theory informs best practices in advising

  **Suggested assessment techniques:**
  - The reader will be able to develop a personal philosophy of advising built on a sound theoretical foundation.
  - The reader will be able to identify/explain/understand student behaviors, and apply that knowledge to h/her advising practices.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the foundational theories that provide a framework for developmental advising.

  **Suggested assessment techniques:**
  - The reader will be able to identify major developmental theorists and theories in the evolution of academic advising.
  - The reader will be able to identify developmental theories that apply to the psychosocial and intellectual development of students.

- Demonstrate an understanding of recent theories that have developed from the classical theorists.

  **Suggested assessment techniques:**
  - The reader will be able to identify current psychosocial theorists that expand the concept of developmental theory.
  - The reader will be able to compare and contrast theorists and theories who have influenced academic advising as we know it today.

**Aiming for Excellence activities**

- Invite a faculty member to provide an overview of developmental theories followed by a discussion in which advisors brainstorm about application of those theories to case studies provided by advisors.
- Attend or organize a common reading program focused on advising theories used or being discussed on campuses, such as Baxter Magolda’s (2010) theories on self-authorship or Bloom et al.’s (2008) application of appreciative advising.
- Hold informal gatherings to discuss applying theory; best practices; and the intersections of teaching, learning, and developmental theories. Encourage participants to dig deep to conceptualize one or two new ideas to subsequently share with the group. Create a list of the ideas and begin a scholarly deconstruction of them using publications from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising.
- Discuss with other advisors how foundational theories apply to current student demographics. For example, address ways that Chickering’s development vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) specifically apply to first-generation or recently immigrated students.
• Use an advising journal to evaluate the anticipated and realized outcome of theories used in practice. At the end of the first semester of advising, read through the journal and look for ways in which your advising style reflected your understanding of theory.

• Review appointment notes for one of your students. Try to determine where the student falls on Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors of development. Discuss your conclusions with experienced advisors or your supervisor. Consider questions to ask the student in your next session.

• Observe an appointment with a veteran advisor. Discern where the student might fall on the continuum created by Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors. Discuss your observations with the veteran advisor.

• Read through the case studies in Appendix B and apply Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) vectors in analyzing the situations. Consider ways to prioritize the conference and the questions you would ask the student; that is, plan and visualize the advising session.

• Consider situations in which O’Banion’s (1972/1994/2009) top-down regression theory proves useful. Review a student’s file or look to a case study offered in this Guidebook or elsewhere and generate a list of appropriate questions for the student in the situation presented.

• After reading about Schlossberg’s (1989) theory of mattering, list the ways you can indicate to students that they matter to you.