The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) is an organization of professional advisors, faculty, administrators, students and others from a variety of settings who do academic advising or otherwise work to promote quality academic advising on college and university campuses. As members of this organization or of the profession of academic advising, or as others who advise or provide related programs and services to students, we must recognize our responsibility not only to students and the institutions in which our advising is done, but to society, to colleagues, and to ourselves.

While not all those who do academic advising are professional advisors, anyone carrying out advising functions should be expected to perform in a professional manner. The Core Values identified and discussed here provide a framework against which those who advise can measure their own performance.

In no way does this Core Values statement try to dictate that all academic advising needs to be done in precisely the same way by everyone, or that there is one particular advising philosophy or model. Instead, these are reference points for professionals to use. Furthermore, the Core Values do not carry equal weight. Advisors will find some Core Values more important than others, depending on their own philosophies and those of their colleagues or universities.

The Power of Academic Advising
Few experiences in students’ postsecondary careers have as much potential for influencing their development as does academic advising. Through regular contact with students – whether face-to-face, through the mail, on the telephone, or through computer mediated systems – advisors gain meaningful insights into students’ academic, social, and personal experiences and needs. Advisors use these insights to help students feel a part of the academic community, develop sound academic and career goals, and ultimately be successful learners.

Because of the nature of academic advising, advisors often develop a broad vision of the institution. Advisors can therefore play an important interpretive role with administrators, faculty, and staff, helping them further understand students’ academic and personal development needs. Advisors can teach others to identify students who, with additional attention from academic support staff, may achieve their goals to succeed academically and personally. Students place a great deal of trust in their advisors. That trust warrants quality programs and services. It is through our Core Values that students’ expectations of academic advising are honored.

Beliefs About Students
Like other educators, academic advisors work to strengthen the importance, dignity, potential, and unique nature of each individual served within the academic setting. Our work as advisors is guided by our beliefs that:
- students can be responsible for their own behavior;
- students can be successful as a result of their individual goals and efforts;
- students have a desire to learn;
NACADA Core Values

- learning needs vary according to individual skills, goals and experiences; and
- students hold their own beliefs and opinions.

Why Our Core Values are Important
Out of these beliefs grow our Core Values. Regardless of our professional preparation and experience, each of us in the field of academic advising is ultimately guided in our work by what we perceive as important, what we value, and what we believe about those we serve – primarily students, but also others in the institutions within which we work, and even the institutions themselves.

We recognize the complex nature of academic advising, the wide variety of settings and tasks for which academic advisors are responsible, and the diverse backgrounds and experiences of academic advisors. Yet, while values and beliefs are by their very nature individual, there are many that are subscribed to by those who advise students. Through this statement of Core Values we communicate to others what they can expect from us. These Core Values may be used to validate our conduct in our diverse roles and our relationships within the academic community.

The Core Values

Students deserve dependable, accurate, respectful, honest, friendly, and professional service. In order to serve students well, academic advisors understand that they are responsible to many constituents who comprise our academic communities. This is the foundation on which the following Core Values rest.

Advisors are responsible to the students and individuals they serve. The cooperative efforts of all who advise help to deliver quality programs and services to students. These include, but are not limited to, giving accurate and timely information, maintaining regular office hours, and keeping appointments.

Advisors help students develop a perception of themselves and their relationship to the future. Advisors introduce students in a nurturing way to the world they are entering – teaching them to value the learning process, put the college experience into perspective, become more responsible, set priorities and evaluate sequence of events, and be honest with themselves.

Advisors encourage self-reliance by helping students make informed and responsible decisions, set realistic goals, and develop thinking, learning, and life management skills to meet present and future needs. Advisors work with students to help them accomplish the goals and objectives they have established for themselves. Advisors encourage students to be responsible for their own success and progress. They respect students’ rights to their individual beliefs and opinions but are not dictated to by them.

Advisors work to modify barriers to student progress; identify burdensome, ineffective, and inefficient policies and procedures; and work to effect change. When the needs of students and the institution are in conflict, advisors seek a resolution that is in the best interest of both parties.
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Advisors inform students about appropriate grievance procedures in cases where students find the resolution unsatisfactory.

Advisors recognize the changing nature of the college and university environment and student body. They support students in appropriate ways (e.g. advocate at the administrative level for recognition of these changes; offer varied office hours; and acknowledge the special needs of all students and the pressures on them to juggle study with work, family, and other interpersonal demands).

Advisors are knowledgeable about and sensitive to federal, state, and their own institution’s policies and procedures, especially those governing such matters as sexual harassment, personal relationships with students, privacy of student information, equal treatment, equal access, and equal opportunity.

Advisors respect the rights of students to have information about themselves kept confidential. Advisors share information with others about students and their programs only when both advisor and student believe that information is relevant and will result in increased information or assistance, assessment, and provision of appropriate services to the student.

Advisors gain access to and use computerized information about students only when that information is relevant to the advising they are doing with that particular student. Advisors enter or change information on students’ records only when legitimately authorized to do so.

Advisors need to document advising contacts adequately to aid subsequent advising interactions.

Advisors are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process. Effective advising requires a broad-based, or holistic, approach to working with students. Academic advisors develop crucial ties with others who assist students in diverse areas, such as admissions, orientation, financial aid, housing, health services, athletics, course selection and satisfaction of academic requirements, special physical and educational needs (e.g. disabilities, study skills, psychological counseling), foreign study, career development, co-curricular programs, and graduation clearance.

Advisors are facilitators and mediators. Responsible academic advisors recognize their limitations and use their specialized knowledge effectively.

To make connections between academic advising and other aspects of students’ lives, advisors seek out resources provided by others. Referrals to these resources provide students with further assessments of their needs and access to appropriate programs and services. With others, advisors are responsible for helping students integrate the information they are confronted with and for helping students make well-informed academic decisions.

If peer advisors are used, the supervising advisor will closely monitor the peer advisor regarding adherence to appropriate policies and practices.
Advisors are responsible to the college or university in which they work. Advisors respect the opinions of their colleagues; remain neutral when students present them with comments, questions, or opinions about other faculty or staff; and are non-judgmental about academic programs.

Advisors increase their collective professional strength by sharing their philosophies and techniques with colleagues.

Advisors keep administrators who are not involved directly in the advising process informed and aware of the importance of academic advising in students’ lives, and of the need for administrative support of advising and related activities.

Advisors abide by the specific policies, procedures and values of the department and institution for which they work. Where injustices occur and might interfere with students’ learning, advisors advocate for change on behalf of students with the institution’s administration, faculty, and staff.

Advisors are responsible to higher education generally. Academic advisors honor (and are protected by) the concept of academic freedom as practiced on our campuses. In this spirit, advisors hold a variety of points of view. Academic advisors are free to base their work with students on the most appropriate and optimum theories of college student development and models of delivery for academic advising programs and services.

Advisors accept that one of the goals of education is to introduce students to the world of ideas. One goal of academic advising is to establish a partnership between student and advisor to guide students through their academic programs so they may attain the knowledge gained and offered by faculty.

Academic advisors believe that it is ultimately the responsibility of students to apply what they learn to everyday situations. Advisors help students in understanding this process.

Advisors advocate for students’ educational achievement at the highest attainable standard and support student goals, as well as the educational mission of the institution.

Advisors advocate the creation or strengthening of programs and services that are compatible with students’ academic needs.

Advisors are responsible to the community (including the local community, state, and region in which the institution is located). Academic advisors interpret the institution’s mission, standards, goals, and values to its community, including public and private schools from which the college or university draws its student body. Likewise, advisors understand their student body and regularly inform the schools from which their students come about appropriate preparation so that students may perform successfully in higher education.
Advisors are sensitive to the values and morals of the surrounding community, sharing these with and interpreting them to students. Advisors are aware of community programs and services and may become models for students by participating in community activities themselves.

Advisors are responsible to their professional role as advisors and to themselves personally. To keep advising skills honed and interest high, advisors are encouraged to seek opportunities for professional development through classes, workshops, conferences, reading, consultation with others, and interaction in formal groups with other advisors (e.g. professional organizations like NACADA).

Advisors understand the demands on themselves that emerge from the service nature of the work they do. Advisors develop skills for taking care of themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They learn how to detach themselves from students’ problems while maintaining a keen listening ear and providing sensitive responses. They establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. They need to be nurtured by others within the profession and they need to nurture their colleagues. They seek support for themselves within and outside the institution.

Academic advising lends itself well to research. Advisors may engage in research related to advising, and are encouraged to engage in research related to their own particular training and disciplinary backgrounds. Each research agenda must honor the institution’s safeguards for privacy and humane treatment of subjects.