

**ACADEMIC ADVISING AND COLLEGE STRESSORS IN A LARGE, URBAN
UNIVERSITY**

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
the School of Education in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2017

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

The purpose of this research study was to understand college stressors among undergraduate business students and to propose recommendations for an innovative academic advising program to help students deal with college stressors associated with their academic, extra-curricular, social, career, and personal lives. Guiding questions for the study included (a) How do academic advisors describe the college stressors in undergraduates' daily lives? (b) To what extent do academic advisors feel equipped with advising strategies to help students deal with college stressors? and (c) What kinds of training and other resources do advisors suggest for improving their capacity to address students' stressors? To collect data, the study relied on the qualitative method of one-on-one interviews with six academic advisors of a business school in a large urban university located in the Northeast. The study was guided by Crookston's (1971) notion of 'developmental advising'.

The major findings of the study were that (a) College stressors (grades, major selection, careers, competitive nature of students, peer pressure, freshmen transition, time management, homesickness and parental pressures) and students struggle with those, (b) Academic advisors are uniquely positioned and well-equipped with skills to help students to deal with stressors, and

(c) The advising model put in place by the Executive Director of the business school at the university of study does not allow advisors to help students deal with stressors. Using these findings, the researcher formulated a set of recommendations to improve academic advising. These included (a) Make developmental advising an organizational priority, (b) Restructure the organization to reflect the commitment to developmental advising, (c) Introduce programs and activities that can help students develop as whole persons and excel personally, professionally and academically, and (d) Implement Five C's of academic advising in recruitment of academic advisors.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to my Committee Chair, Dr. John Weidman, for his time and attention to my work from beginning to the end. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Milton Cofield and Dr. Michael Lovorn, for their interest in my development and for their ongoing support and feedback.

There are several other important people who have made this success possible for me:

To my mother, Azra Jafry, who passed during the course of my studies. You were the constant source of motivation and inspiration for me throughout this long journey.

To my husband, Thomas Casey O'Connor, my daughter Shahrzad Jafry O'Connor and my son, Thomas Nile O'Connor who gave me all the confidence and love that I needed and provided the absolute necessary balance to my life.

To my sisters, Naghma and Farhana, nieces Emma and Misha, and nephew Sheezer for their never ending encouragement and support.

To my instructor and friend, Sarah Capello for being an amazing support.

Lastly, to my students who were always there for me when needed!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father, Dr. Syed Ali Safdar Jafry who was ALWAYS my role model and whose spirit guided me throughout many years of my life. His dedication to education, to his students and to his family inspired and motivated me to go through this tough marathon of non-stop hard work. I wish he was here with me.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

During my many years of work experience as an academic advisor in national and international business schools within higher education, I have come to see the undergraduate academic advisor as the first, most significant, and most consistent point of contact between the student and the university. From the time freshmen first set foot on campus until the day they graduate, the academic advisor is there to guide them on their journey. Consistent with my experience, Kuhn, Gordon, and Webber (2002) reminded us that academic advisors are at the forefront of providing support and assistance to college students whether it be basic information or advice on personal issues. The authors stressed that advisors have a major role in the life of students, because they are usually the first people whom a student will contact, even if the problem is beyond academics. They further stress that an advisor can make a real difference in the life of students by contributing to the growth of the whole person and by enhancing their ability to become well-rounded, independent, high achieving, and happy adults. Crookston (1971) believed that higher education provided opportunities for students to develop a plan to achieve self-fulfilling lives and that teaching included any experience that contributed to the student's growth. He also believed that students and advisors should share responsibility for the nature of the advising relationship as well as for the quality of that experience. Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, and

Hawthorne (2013) stressed that academic advising can enhance student experiences by helping students set their professional and personal goals by encouraging them to participate in co-curricular activities and by making them aware of professional development opportunities. Academic advising is "perhaps the only structured campus endeavor that can guarantee students sustained interaction with a caring and concerned adult who can help them shape a meaningful learning experience for themselves" (Hunter & White, 2004, p. 22). "As such, academic advising can and should play a pivotal role in directing student behavior toward those activities that will nurture and support their success toward educational, career, and life goal achievement" (Campbell & Nutt, 2015, p. 5).

In my experience, in this growth is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage the stress of college life. College students, especially freshmen, are a group particularly prone to stress (D'Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991) due to the transitional nature of college life (Towbes & Cohen, 1996). They must adjust to being away from home for the first time, maintain a high level of academic achievement, and adjust to a new social environment. Freshman year represents a stressful transition for college students (Lu, 1994). Despite a multitude of social, academic, and emotional stressors, most college students successfully cope with a complex new life role and achieve academic success. Other students are less able to successfully manage this transition and decide to leave higher education during or at the end of their freshman year (Berard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004). It is estimated that 40% of college students will leave higher education without getting a degree (Porter, 1990) with 75% percent of such students leaving within their first two years of college (Tinto, 1987). The 2013 graduation rate for those entering a college institution full-time and completing a degree within 6 years was just 55% (Newbaker, 2014). Freshman class attrition rates are typically greater than any other academic year and are commonly as high

as 20-30% (Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987). Of students who enrolled full-time in fall 2012, for instance, 68.7% returned to any institution in fall 2013 with only 58% returning to the same institution (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). College students, regardless of year in school, often deal with pressures related to finding a job or a potential life partner (Ross, Neibling, & Heckert, 1999). The amount of stress experienced may be influenced by the individual's ability to effectively cope with stressful events and situations (D'Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991). If stress is not dealt with effectively, feelings of loneliness and nervousness, as well as sleeplessness and excessive worrying may result (Wright, 1967). It is important, therefore, that stress intervention programs be designed to address the stress college students may experience. However, in order to design an effective intervention, the stressors specific to college students must be determined (Wright, 1967). Identifying specific college stressors and how advisors can help students manage those stressors is what the current study hopes to achieve.

1.2 PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

In my current practice as an academic advisor of undergraduates, I see many college students struggling while juggling academic and non-academic activities throughout their undergraduate years. These students exhibit stress in various ways including lower grades, behavioral problems, and absenteeism. It is important, therefore, that students learn techniques to manage stress so that they may maximize their academic and non-academic experiences and ultimately be prepared for the real world. I believe that advisors are in a unique position to empower students with a certain skill set in order for them to be in control of their academic and non-academic activities. Giving students the tools they need to manage stress is an important but often

overlooked part of this role. My problem of practice focuses on examining the college stressors among undergraduates and how academic advisors can help students manage the stressors well.

This study focuses on a small group of academic advisors of business students at a large, urban university in the Northeast. Participants will be asked to share their backgrounds, experiences and observations about college stressors. Results from the study will lead to recommendations that inform the practices of academic advisors, faculty and administrators throughout universities that serve undergraduate populations, and my hope is that those recommendations will help to obtain desired academic outcomes, retention rates and a great sense of belonging.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to propose recommendations for an innovative academic advising program to help students deal with college stressors associated with their academic, extra-curricular, social, career and personal lives. The study focuses on college stressors among undergraduate business students and the perceptions by academic advisors of their capacity to identify these stressors and help students accordingly. The study will explore the following research questions:

Research Questions:

1. How do academic advisors describe the college stressors in undergraduates' daily lives?
2. To what extent do academic advisors feel equipped with advising strategies to help students deal with college stressors?

3. What kinds of training and other resources do advisors suggest for improving their capacity to address students' stressors?

1.4 RATIONALE, RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My interactions and observations as an academic advisor have revealed that many college students tend to struggle with the rigors of college life. A common stressful time for students is the freshman year adjustment to college life and their newfound independence. Though freshmen are predicted to be successful, more than one-third of all entering freshmen will not continue into a sophomore year (Noel & Levitz, 1983). Research data are fairly clear in showing that freshman year is the crucial adjustment period for college students and the major determinate of continuance (Rowery & Wilkinson, 1986; Sprandel, 1976). While the college adjustment is occurring, freshmen students are also learning to manage their academic workload. As the years go on they add extracurricular activities, internships, and job searches to their ever-increasing workload. High-achieving and high-ability students often seem overwhelmed by their self-imposed schedules and desire to do everything well. Melinda (2003) wrote,

Some high ability students never lose momentum. They view college as the next stop on the road to ongoing success...These students face tremendous pressure to succeed, not only in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom...this pressure comes from parents, friends, faculty members, advisors, society, and from the students themselves, and each has expectations that the students will perform exceptionally high levels in all facets of their lives. (p. 58)

While college experiences are new for each individual student, they are not uncommon and the

skills they learn in managing these various experiences will serve them well in their future professional lives.

It is important to remember, however, that in addition to these academic stressors, off-campus pressures may also contribute to this feeling of stress. Often, family pressures and expectations weigh heavily on students who fear they cannot meet those expectations. Menezes, (2005) notes how parents are becoming more intrusive and demanding and that they expect to be an integral part of their children's college life.

Sometimes, unfortunate family circumstances may be an emotional distraction from academic work. Financial pressures or scholarship requirements can also be a concern and social pressures are common for this age group as they attempt to manage their peer's expectations against their own and others'. Leigh (2014) noted that college students may use loans and credit cards to pay for college necessities and sometimes they generate personal debt by financing nonessentials or borrowing to enjoy an expensive lifestyle.

Many are quite adept at managing and channeling their stress positively. But for others, this stress can prove to be a significant hurdle. These students may begin to struggle academically or emotionally while others may drop out of school entirely. Understanding the primary college stressors and how students react to them will help to build an advising model that addresses the student as a whole person (educational, career and personal) (Grites, 2013) and help them develop beyond the classroom.

Academic advisors are a key point of contact for students at the university and are uniquely positioned to help and teach them how to successfully manage college stressors. Academic advising is intended to help students be successful in college and to prepare for their next phase in life (National Academic Advising Association, 2003). In addition, academic

advisors need to understand the factors that affect student success (Robert and Harold, 2013). With proper training, advisors will be better able to recognize the symptoms of stress and address the issue before it becomes a problem. In fact, advising programs and strategies can be put in place in anticipation of the most common problems. Students who have the proper tools and an open line of communication with a supportive advisor will be more likely to channel their stress positively and avoid many of the potential negative consequences.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This qualitative research study is organized around five chapters. Chapter 1 provides background information that contextualizes the study, its research questions, and its significance to practice and research. Chapter 2 gives detailed review of the literature in five major areas: (a) Theoretical Framework; (b) Prescriptive vs. Developmental Advising; (c) Role of Academic Advisors; (d) Stress and College Stressors; (e) Academic Advising and College Stressors. A detailed report describing the research setting, approach and methodology follows in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 focuses on the results of the data analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 makes recommendations on how academic advising can be improved to help students deal with college stressors.

2.0 BACKGROUND LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of my problem of practice is based on experience with college students. In my research, I have found several articles on stress, causes of stress, and effectiveness of advising. However, the issue of using effective advising strategies to help undergraduate students manage stress has not been addressed directly. My hope is that my research will result in the development of effective advising strategies to help students better deal with college stressors, which will lead to student success.

2.1 ACADEMIC ADVISING AND ROLE OF ACADEMIC ADVISORS

Ender, Winston, & Miller (1982) described academic advisors as the first academic professionals students encounter when coming to college. Young-Jones et al. (2013) stressed that academic advising can enhance student experiences by helping them set their professional and personal goals, by encouraging them to participate in co-curricular activities, and by making them aware of professional development opportunities. However, academic advisors are also often the primary point of contact when a student is struggling beyond academics. According to Crookston (1994), developmental academic advising is “concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student’s rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and

evaluation skills (p. 5). McMahan (2008) views the job of an academic advisor as a rewarding vocation that allows advisors who recognize important opportunities to make real differences in students' lives and academic careers.

Gillispie (2003) defined academic advising as an increasing level of presence and involvement in the development of college students and the educational paths they choose. Although academic advising has been a defined region within education for only a few short decades, it has been a prevalent concern since the birth of the college institutions of America. Chickering (1994) wrote,

The fundamental purpose of academic advising is to help students become effective agents for their own lifelong learning and personal development. Our relationships with students, the questions we raise, the perspectives we share, the resources we suggest, short-term decisions and long-range plans we help them think through all should aim to increase their capacity to take charge of their own existence. (p. 50)

Academic advising is an educational activity, according to Gordon, Habley, and Associates (2000) that depends on valid explanations of complex student behaviors and institutional conditions to assist college students in making and executing educational and life plans. In terms of scope of academic advising, Gordon et al., elaborated on five beliefs that establish the practical boundaries of academic advising. The first belief is that the purpose of academic advising is student learning and professional development. The second belief is that a focus on developmental advising is preferable to prescriptive advising. The third is about the context of academic advising which stresses that the educationally compelling circumstances are calling for the formation and implementation of educational and life plans. Fourth and most important is about the focus of academic advising, which should be on the *whole person*. Lastly,

“the content of academic advising is constructed knowledge about students’ educational and life plans” (Gordon et al., 2000. pp. 19-20). Thus, it is evident that academic advising is a developmental function focused on promoting student learning and personal development.

Dougherty (2007) took advising to another level by stressing how academic advising plays an important role in the lives of high-achieving students, since their stress levels are different than under-achieving students. According to her, the high-achieving students have unique concerns that can affect them socially, personally and developmentally, but many also experience high levels of pressure to remain exceptional students. High-achieving students are usually overlooked by academic advisors, because they excel in academics, and it is assumed that they do not require as much advising because they are autonomous, self-motivated, know how to attain their goals (Glennen & Martin, 2000).

Kennemer and Hurt (2013) argued that advising is a critical component of higher education. Gordon et al. (2000) reviewed the history of advising and found that academic advising has been a fixture on the higher education scene since colleges were first established in colonial America. Gordon et al. wrote that advising in colonial colleges was a function fulfilled by faculty who assumed responsibility for the intellectual, ethical, and moral development of students in a mentoring capacity. However, over a period of time, institutions of higher education (particularly the undergraduate schools) have shifted from faculty engaging in academic advising to professional staff taking on this important function. One of the reasons for this shift in Kennemer and Hurt’s (2013) view was that at both four- and two-year institutions, faculty are commonly trained in their academic discipline—a discipline that, at best, is tangentially related to advising. Thus, even faculty who want to be good advisors face significant challenges in developing their advising skillset. He further elaborated that faculty advisors are expected to be

student-centered. However, faculty advisors have significant responsibilities outside of advising that hold significant weight in the tenure and promotion process (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Therefore, faculty attitudes toward advising and the quality of faculty advising can be impacted by the lack of reward for advising (Titley & Titley, 1982). The institution's mission and/or administrative priorities for faculty determine the amount of emphasis placed on advising. Tenure track faculty are typically consumed with other responsibilities including teaching, scholarship, and service. In many cases, exceptional advising and out of classroom access to students is expected but has no real impact towards the tenure or promotion process. Frost (1991) emphasized that faculty advising was popular with students in the early 19th century when faculty helped students with course selection, but it was not always effective. She points out that as colleges grew into universities and research began to rival teaching as the major emphasis, the gap between faculty members and students widened. Students became more numerous and diverse while faculty members became more specialized.

Due to faculty commitment to teaching and their other involvements, it has become crucial that academic advisors are professionally trained staff members who can help students develop and grow through different stages of their academic life. One problem that most college students face is managing the stress of day-to-day college life, which is where academic advisors can make a difference in students' lives.

2.2 STRESS AND COLLEGE STRESSORS

Stress is a major issue for students as they cope with a variety of academic, social, and personal challenges (Lin & Huang, 2013). Many internal and external factors contribute to stress of

college students. External factors may include financial, social pressures, internship search, job hunts, extra-curricular activities, type A student personalities, sleeping and eating habits, lack of exercise, time constraints, academic goals and achievements, relationships, loneliness and worries about future careers. On the other hand, internal factors that may cause stress among students are thoughts, feelings, attitudes and emotional well-being.

Ross et al. (1999) determined that the major sources of stress among college students stem from interpersonal, intrapersonal, environmental, and academic experiences. They conducted a survey that showed that intrapersonal sources of stress such as changes in sleeping habits, vacations or breaks, changes in eating habits, new responsibilities, and increased workload were the most common sources of stress. The authors discovered that freshmen tend to be more stressed than upperclassmen, and that the ongoing evaluation, in terms of papers, tests, and assignments, may cause stress in the lives of college students. It is important to note that this study was conducted only in the spring semester and it may be that there were some unique factors that contributed to students' stress. The situation could have been different in the fall semester.

In fact, the structure of the school calendar may very well be a source of stress in itself. Goldring (2012) examined how the structure of the quarter system in college can cause symptoms of depression among students. He linked symptoms of depression to external pressures such as school and extracurricular time commitments. His survey at Stanford University showed that the structure of the quarter system and its demands might impact the levels of depression among undergraduates. The results of his analysis showed that neither homework hours nor extracurricular activities impacted depression. On the other hand, midterms and major assignments had a greater impact on student's depression, raising it by almost two

points on his scale. The author concluded that stress among college students is on the rise.

However, we must also remember that factors outside of the university experience also play a role in understanding how the many varied experiences of college life interplay. Pedersen (2012) examined stress spillover from school and family as experienced by college students. Pedersen drew from Mendoza (1981) and Rocha-Singh (1994) when reporting that sources of stress among college students exist along multiple dimensions, including academic, financial, familial, personal, and environmental domains and that women had higher school spillover than men. Stress spillover implies that stress or strain at one point can lead to stress at another point. For example, stress at home may lead to stress in school. Therefore, it is important for advisors to think of advisees as whole, unique persons and not just students. Like Goldring (2012), Pedersen suggested that stress among students is on the rise. This stress can manifest itself in physical or emotional problems but may also result in mental disorders.

Resources can play an important role when it comes to stress. In terms of resources, the socioeconomic levels of students can cause stress among those who are taking loans to go to college as well as those from wealthier backgrounds who might have less financial stress but more stress due to the unreasonable expectations of their families. Lack of funds can be one major source of stress among college students. As pointed out by Grable and Joo (2006), there is a potential financial crisis on college campuses. According to them, the combination of consumer debt, educational loans, and poor financial management skills is leading some students to financial collapse. They further elaborate on this point that this may be due to the fact that students who face financial stress tend to be more likely than others to drop out of college, achieve lower grades or restrict their access to on-campus extracurricular activities. The problem of student debt is more evident in minority students (Grable & Joo, 2006). Sages, Britt, and

Cumbie (2013) argued that positive financial behaviors can help prevent financial stress and possibly help with college student retention rates. They further go on to explain that financial behaviors can be predicted based on certain demographics characteristics, resource availability, and financial knowledge. Sages et al. called social class an elephant in the room that shapes the entire education system and creates vast inequalities of opportunities between the haves and have-nots.

Culture has been observed as another important factor responsible for stress. In terms of culture, family structure and college environment play a major role in creating positive or negative stress among college students. Renk and Smith (2007) emphasized that stressors of college life such as planning for the future, struggling with exams and assignments, meeting the demands of challenging professors, deciding on a major, and transitioning into financial and emotional independence can be an overwhelming experience for many students. These students may wonder whether they will be able to meet their own expectations as well as those of their parents and families (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981). Peer culture is another element that adds stress to college students' lives. Renn and Arnold (2003) suggested:

...college students are embedded in interacting mesosystems of academic, social, family, and work life. Each of these has developmental effects on the student. The effects within and across systems may reinforce one another or they may act against one another, drawing attention to discrepancies and causing the student to confront contradictory processes and messages between individual microsystems. (p. 270)

Snyder (2015) raised an important issue related to cultural stress. He points out how a growing number of psychologists have emphasized distinguishing between largely individualistic and collectivist cultures. Western culture is referred to as individualistic and characterized by

individuals seeking independence from others by attending to self-based needs and desires. Asian or Asian-American culture (several US colleges now have an increasingly high percentage of Asian-American students) is referred to as collectivist, where the focus is on maintaining a fundamental interdependence and fitting in is not only valued but also often expected.

Beyond resources and culture, young college students often struggle to find their identity in their new university environment. This is particularly evident with elite students at prestigious universities. These students were immersed in their high school identity as superior students. Upon arrival at their new school they find that they are no longer superior but may very well struggle to keep up. They are also adjusting to new social dynamics and a life between the dependence of youth and independence of adulthood. Furthermore, these students find themselves progressing along a path toward a major and future career, which further alters their identity. Feldman (1972) wrote about identities of students:

[In college, the] individual student is incorporated into new social positions, after which he is routinely motivated and encouraged to take on the qualities appropriate to these [new and validated] positions. Moreover, as a student progresses through college, those around him - teachers, peers, parents, and the general community within and outside the college, etc. - define and label him according to the positions he hopes to occupy when he leaves college as well as by the new positions he occupies in college. Not only is he an upperclassman rather than a lowerclassman or sociology major rather than fine arts major, he is also a would-be lawyer rather than a would-be plumber, and so forth. In addition to (and as part of) others' view of him, he is given opportunities to engage in behaviors that were previously either not open to him, not particularly feasible, or not easily do-able (given his previous positions). As new

social identities are pressed and impressed upon him, and as he is given the structural opportunities to practice and enact their behavioral implications, the student may well begin to conceive of himself as being a different person from what he once was. (pp. 13-14)

According to Dougherty (2007), Chickering's (1969) theory of identity development provides a psychosocial framework for the personal development of college students. Chickering views the establishment of identity as the primary developmental issue that students strive to solidify during their college years. He identifies the following seven "vectors" of development that students typically experience: 1) developing competence, 2) managing emotions, 3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, 4) developing mature interpersonal relationships, 5) establishing identity, 6) developing purpose, 7) developing integrity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) also identified key aspects of the college environment that exert powerful influences on student development including institutional objectives, institutional size, student-faculty relationships, curriculum, teaching, friendships and student communities, and student development programs and services.

According to Goldring (2012), college is a high-pressure environment, and its psychological toll on students is alarming. He notes that college students face a unique set of pressures in the academic arena, which renders them vulnerable to lowered self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Goldring draws from Blazer, Kessler, McGonagle, & Swartz (1994) that young adults in the United States have a higher incidence of depression than other age groups. Misra and McKean (2000) were also concerned with student stress levels. The authors investigated the interrelationship among academic stress, anxiety, time management and leisure satisfaction and found that effective strategies to reduce academic stress among college students would be

effective time management skills and anxiety reduction in conjunction with leisure activities.

Pedersen (2012) defined stress as a demand, either internal or external, that results in emotional arousal and requires a change of behavior (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Ragheb & McKinney, 1993). He further stresses on how these demands, or stressors, may be physical, psychological, social or environmental; take the form of a life event or chronic strain (Pearlin, 1989); and how these stressors are largely dependent upon individual perception (Lazarus, 1966, 1977). Pederson (2012) draws from Mendoza (1981) and Rocha-Singh (1994) that college students perceive stressors existing along multiple dimensions, including academic, financial, familial, personal, and environmental domains.

Today's college students, particularly those attending leading universities, are experiencing an enormous amount of stress but very little is being done to help them. According to Snyder (2001), stress is defined as the pressure or demand that is placed upon an organism to adapt or adjust. The term, stress, comes with negative connotations, but if one learns to manage stress well it can also be a positive motivating force. Unfortunately, many students do not know how to manage their stress well and succumb to it.

Addus, Chen, & Khan (2007) emphasized that the goal of academic advising centers in universities should be to enhance student academic performance and produce marketable graduates by providing extended assistance and guidance to students in academic activities and related areas. The authors further elaborated on their point by saying that students need to be given individual and unique attention suited to their specific needs. They concluded their study by saying that in order to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, higher education institutions must listen to their students' unique needs and priorities by assessing assistance services available to students.

2.2.1 Developmental Advising and College Stressors

Crookston (1994) linked advising to the theory of student development by organizing it around two principles summarized as:

1. Higher learning provides an opportunity for developing persons to plan to achieve self-fulfilling lives, and
2. Teaching includes any experience that contributes to individual growth and can be evaluated.

O'Banion's (1972) academic advising model proposed five steps to address the needs of students as whole persons:

1. Exploration of life goals
2. Exploration of vocational goals
3. Program choice
4. Course choice, and
5. Scheduling courses

O'Banion called these steps the five dimensions of academic advising and asserted that any well-conceived program of academic advising will include activities related to these dimensions. According to him, it may be possible for each of these dimensions to be explored in a single day; most colleges, however, are likely to consider the process of academic advising as continuous, beginning before the student attends class and continuing throughout his stay at college.

Robbins (2012) along with King (2000) and Brown (2008) emphasized three components of effective advisor training: informational, relational and conceptual. The informational component includes detailed information on institutional and programmatic policies and procedures that advisors need to be aware of when working with students. The relational

component includes interpersonal skills and the conceptual component includes what advisors need to know about the institutional mission, student learning, and the developmental theories that guide and support students in the academic careers. Givans (2012) outlined that institutions that are serious about student learning, persistence, and graduation rates must provide training and professional development for their academic advisors. Research (Klepfer & Hill, 2012) demonstrated that academic advising significantly contributes to student persistence towards graduation. When we fail to provide coordinated training and professional development to academic advisors, we leave students vulnerable to the luck of the draw. He further elaborates that coordinated training and development of academic advisors is important because all students, regardless of major or luck of the draw, deserve to have access to advisors who are knowledgeable and up-to-date on the policies, procedures, theories, and resources that help them succeed. Training and professional development for advisors helps students by setting expectations for advisor job knowledge and performance, while providing advisors with the tools and practice needed to meet those expectations.

One aspect of advisor training and development should focus on the development of stress management strategies. Goldring and Pedersen (2012) suggested that stress among students is on the rise, and, as mentioned above, this stress can manifest itself in physical or emotional problems and may also result in mental disorders. Weiner and Weiner (1996) conducted a need assessment analysis of 24 urban centered university students with psychiatric disabilities. Using questionnaires and on-site interviews, they identified several areas of concern including focus, attention, organization, low self-esteem, problems with trust, stigma, and high levels of stress. According to this study, college students have consistently identified issues such as career direction, time management, and awkward social skills as stressors. The authors

emphasize the importance of one-on-one interactions with academic advisors and counselors in addition to a peer support system.

Ross et al. (1999) believed that stress intervention programs need to be designed to address sources of stress among college students. Since the academic advisor serves as such an important point of contact, he or she can make a real difference in the life of students. Young-Jones, et al. (2003) said that the level of support one feels within the academic setting is directly linked to retention and success. They further elaborated that academic advisors should not only engage with students but also encourage student involvement with powerful learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom. “The advising process can help students to identify personal strengths and interests related to their educational and career goals” (Young-Jones et al. 2003, p. 9). Addus, Chen, & Khan (2007) conducted a qualitative analysis of academic performance and efforts on the part of students to seek academic help and advising at North Carolina A&T State University. Instead of a central university-advising center, a college-based advising center was suggested to improve students’ academic performance and career prospects. The author emphasized that, although effective teaching is the ultimate goal of higher education, it is also critical that students are motivated enough to manage their work/life balance. The study also revealed that factors such as long study hours, lack of time to manage coursework, lack of time to seek advice, family backgrounds, financial situations, social and extracurricular activities add a lot of stress to students’ lives which ultimately affected their academic performance. Like others, Misra and McKean (2000) stressed that advisors have a major role in the life of students, because they are usually the primary point of contact, even when the problem is beyond academics.

This unique position, coupled with Houghton, Wu, Godwin, Neck, & Manz’s (2011)

suggestion that college students comprise a group that is particularly prone to stress, makes the need for appropriate development and implementation of stress-related advising programs imperative. The goal, however, should not be one of unending support and caretaking. Rather, Houghton et al. (2011) emphasized that it is effective emotion regulation within the context of emotional intelligence and effective use of cognitive strategies within the context of self-leadership that leads to positive emotions, attitudes, and self-efficacy resulting in more effective stress coping. Therefore, advisors need to be in the role of teachers and not of problem solvers.

Since both the advisor and advisee share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed, it is important that advisors set up certain goals and focus on achieving those while they develop their relationships with the advisees. It is also important the advisees understand their role in the process of academic advising and not develop unrealistic expectations from the advisors. Gordon et al. (2000) suggested that an ideal academic advising model should focus on the following:

- Assist students in realizing their values;
- Help students in understanding and evaluating their abilities, skills, capabilities, interests, and limitations;
- Assist students in developing and considering their educational and career goals in accordance with their abilities, interests and skills;
- Help students in developing decision-making skills;
- Help students in understanding and managing the stress (positive or negative) of their day-to-day undergraduate experience and competitiveness;
- Provide students with guidance on institutional policies, programs, procedures, and resources;

- Help students develop the ability to think outside the box;
- Help students develop realistic educational and professional goals;
- Help students in evaluating their progress towards the degree;
- Help students develop professionally and become complete persons and good citizens.

The academic advisors who employ the “best practices” can help students develop academically and professionally. Some of the “best practices” outlined by the University of Missouri (2009) include maintaining regular contact with advisees, establishing positive relationships with advisees, providing accurate and timely information about the University and its program, adopting a developmental approach to help advisees become independent learners and self-reliant problem solvers, enhancing advisees’ understanding of and support for the University’s public affairs mission, and maintaining a high degree of professionalism and engaging in personal growth and development.

2.3 CONCLUSION

A review of the literature on academic advising, differences between prescriptive and developmental advising, and student stress and college stressors revealed several conclusions. First, academic advising plays a very important role in the life of a college student. Second, the two competing models noted in the literature are the prescriptive and developmental advising models. Third, research in academic advising shows that developmental advising can help a student become a whole person beyond college. Fourth, stress among college students is on rise, and it is important to understand what the college stressors are. Fifth, the literature reveals the best practices of advising and shows how better understanding of advising best practices can

result in superior results. Those best practices include using a developmental advising approach with students, helping students manage the stress of their day-to-day undergraduate life, helping students think outside the box, and helping students develop personally and professionally.

If universities are serious about developing well-rounded, successful men and women, it is important that they consider how they might attack the problem of stress among college students. Including stress management as a focus in the strategic planning process will help ensure that all members of the college are aware and capable of properly helping students when they need it most.

College students express stress in several ways including rebellious behaviors, academic performance, low attendance in classes, and procrastination. In order for students to excel in college and to develop as a whole person, it is crucial that academic advisors provide help to deal with the stressors of college life. Advisors need to have an advising model that covers all aspects of advising including academic, personal and professional development for college students. It should not only be confined to pure academics, but it needs to go beyond that. Also, advisors need to have adequate education and training to be able to develop and implement such an advising model.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Merriam (2009), a theoretical framework is the underlying structure, the scaffolding, or the frame of one's study. The theoretical framework for this research is built around the notion of developmental advising. "In 1972, Burns B. Crookston wrote an article in the Journal of College Student Personnel titled 'A Developmental View of Academic Advising as

Teaching' - the term *developmental academic advising* was born" (King, 2005, n. p.). King (2005) pointed out that the developmental advising, as opposed to prescriptive advising, focuses on the whole person, and it works with the student at that person's own life stage of development. As Raushi (1993) suggested, "to advise from a developmental perspective is to view students at work on life tasks in the context of their whole life settings, including the college experience" (p. 6). Furthermore, "According to Crookston, developmental academic advising 'is concerned not only with a specific personal or vocational decision but also with facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills'" (King, 2005, n. p.). In prescriptive advising, the advisors take care of only academic problems. The advisor does not deal with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising, and the advisor is not expected to be knowledgeable about help with non-academic concerns. On the other hand, in developmental advising, the advisor teaches the student to be a problem solver, deals with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising, and is able to help with non-academic concerns (Crookston, 1971, 1994).

Crookston (1971, 1994) noted that in prescriptive advising, the advisor only focuses on the academic life of a student and, unlike in developmental advising, he does not encourage discussion of personal or social issues. In a nutshell, according to Crookston (1971, 1994), the developmental advisor takes personal interest in students' personal and professional development while at the same time helps them become independent and learn to deal with problems whether academic or personal by suggesting them resources and providing guidance.

Creamer and Creamer (1994) offer a conceptual framework for developmental advisors around the following six dimensions:

1. Setting career and life goals;
2. Building self-insight and esteem;
3. Broadening interests;
4. Establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships;
5. Clarifying personal values and styles of life;
6. Enhancing critical thinking and reasoning.

Creamer and Creamer (1994) stressed that the above six dimensions cannot be achieved without active involvement from an advisor. In order to achieve these six dimensions, advisors need to take initiatives and conduct programs including goal-setting seminars, career exploration activities, interviews of successful people, individual and group assessments, guided participation in campus activities, sessions on academic achievement, etc.. The authors further elaborated on the importance of developmental advising by stating, “students' needs are not always delivered to the advisor at predictable times and in precisely defined terms; thus, constant engagement in potently interactive, developmentally oriented activities with students will poised the advisor for strategic teaching” (Creamer & Creamer, 1994, p. 23).

Grites (2013) described developmental advising as an approach that remains the fundamental approach for practitioners of all types. He summarized the concept as:

1. *Developmental academic advising is not a theory.* It is based on developmental theories and perspectives, but the practice is an advising strategy, a method, a technique, an approach, a way of doing advising.
2. *Developmental academic advising is holistic.* The approach includes the education and the development of the whole student (educational, career, and personal) and

acknowledges that these dimensions cannot be treated independently, as events in one dimension will often affect another dimension or both of them.

3. *Developmental academic advising is based on student growth (success).* The developmental approach attempts to take students from their point of entry, along each dimension, and facilitate growth. Whether the student is underprepared or an honors student (educational dimension), undecided or 100% committed to a major (career dimension), first-generation or Ivy League legacy student (personal dimension), the developmental approach uses the student's current characteristics to assist him or her in moving positively along the continuum of each dimension.
4. *Developmental academic advising is a shared activity.* Both students and advisors contribute to this effort. Students must learn to be honest and forthcoming; advisors need to be tolerant and provocative; both must be trustworthy. (p.13)

2.4.1 Developmental vs. prescriptive advising

According to The Encyclopedia of Education (2002), developmental advising differs from a prescriptive advising approach in its emphasis on shared responsibility. Prescriptive advising tends to “emphasize the authority of advisers and the limitations of students. Prescriptive advisers supply answers to specific questions but rarely address broad-based academic concerns” (Encyclopedia of Education, 2002, n. p.). In contrast, in the developmental approach advisors urge “students to take responsibility for their own college experience and career goals” (Encyclopedia of Education, 2002, n. p.). The latter approach is beneficial because it “contributes to students' rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, and behavioral awareness, as well as problem-solving, decision-making and evaluation skills” (Encyclopedia of

Education, 2002, n. p). Creamer and Scott (2000) draw a distinction between the two terms by noting that developmental advising requires advisors to be knowledgeable on a broader range of topics. This is because the developmental approach is intentional about inviting the student to discuss the setting of personal, career, and life goals rather than just the requirements of a particular course or degree (Creamer & Scott, 2000, pp. 340-41).

2.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following inquiry questions guided this study:

1. How do academic advisors describe the college stressors in undergraduates' daily lives?
2. To what extent academic advisors feel equipped with advising strategies to help students deal with college stressors?
3. What kinds of training and other resources do advisors suggest for improving their capacity to address students' stressors?

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH SETTING

The research site for the current case study is a large urban university located in the East Coast. It is a prestigious, large urban school that offers various undergraduate programs in the areas of business, nursing, engineering, and liberal arts. This university is known for its rigorous and competitive environment from admission to graduation. The current study specifically focuses on the university's business school and its academic advising staff where the total number of students is about 2,400 and the number of advisors advising these students is ten. In addition to the advising staff, the business school also has its own career center where the total number of full-time career counselors is four to five and part-time career counselors is six to seven. Academic advisors who solely focus on academic advising and career and professional development are the foci of career center and university central. The business program offers several majors that students declare usually in the sophomore year. Each major has certain course and QPA requirements.

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3. What kinds of training and other resources do advisors suggest for improving their capacity to address students' stressors?

3.3 METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the purpose of this inquiry, I used a qualitative approach to engage advisors from the business school of a large urban university directly through in-depth interviews. Using this approach helped me explore the inner advising experiences of interviewees, explore how meanings are formed and transformed, and take a holistic and comprehensive approach to the study of phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In-depth interviews are referred to as a qualitative research technique, which involves “conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation” (Boyce and Neale, 2006, p. 3). Seidman (2013) emphasized that interviewing is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experiences of individuals whose lives reflect those issues. He further elaborated on the importance of interviewing as a qualitative approach by stressing, “As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people’s ability to make meaning

through language” (Seidman, 2013, p. 13). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to use a list of flexible questions from a respondent who can provide responses using his or her own words and as much detail as they feel necessary (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin & Lowden, 2013). According to Patton (2002), “the purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective and help us discover what we cannot directly observe...to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind” (p. 340). He further explains:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe...We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (Patton, 2002, pp. 340-341)

Interviews with advisors helped me understand how advisors feel about the college stressors among undergraduates, their ability to help stressed students, and their thoughts on potentially improving that ability. My interview protocol had a total of 16 questions. The first set of questions inquired about advisors’ approach to advising, their philosophy and intent, what a typical advising meeting looks like, and what the most important considerations in advising are. The second set of questions focused on diving deeper into the concept of stress by inquiring about the sources of stress among students and whether advisors should help students manage the college stressors. The third set of questions asked for recommendations on how to help students deal with stressors and what resources should be made available to them.

The design of this study is qualitative measuring the experience, perceptions, and opinions through one-on-one interviews with advisors of the business school in a large urban university.

According to Glaser (1978), the comparative method should begin by collecting data, then finding key issues, events or activities in the data that become main categories for focus. Glaser suggests to collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus and then write about the categories explored, keeping in mind past incidents while searching for new ones. He further suggests to work with the data and emerging model to discover relationships, and then sample, code, and write with the core categories in mind.

Boyce and Neale (2006) recommended the following protocol once the interviews are conducted:

- Read through the interview responses and look for patterns or themes among the participants
- If you get a variety of themes, see if you can group them in any meaningful way, such as by type of participant. You may, for example, find that younger participants tend to think and feel differently from older ones or that men and women respond differently.
- You can also identify the responses that seem to have been given with enthusiasm, as opposed to those that the participants answered in only a few words. (p.7).

Following the above-mentioned protocols, I audio-recorded the interviews and then, listening through a few times, transcribed the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, I noted in summary shorthand the key elements contained in each answer. After completing this process for each interview, I compiled a list of those shorthand summaries to examine for relationships and key themes. After grouping similar responses, several themes emerged including personal

approach, time constraints, structural constraints, college stressors, self-assessment, goals, and advising qualities. I continued with an iterative process of review and re-review to ensure data were thoroughly organized and properly and coherently coded and categorized.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with six academic advisors of the business school. The interview protocol used to guide the flow of each interview is described in this section and listed in full in Appendix B.

Each interview was conducted for one to two hours depending on interviewee's schedule. Interviewees were emailed the interview protocol in advance, which used a list of questions to promote standardization between the researcher and the interviewee. As suggested by Menter et al. (2013), each question in the semi-structured interview asked sub-questions or probes to help further explore the topic that helped stimulate the discussion if the informant requires further clarification. All these interviews were conducted in the fall semester 2016.

In preparing and conducting the interviews, I was primarily guided by the developmental advising philosophy of Crookston (1994). His notion of developmental advising is not only concerned with academic decisions but also with "facilitating the student's rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision making, and evaluation skills" (Crookston, 1994, p. 5).

3.4.1 Interview Protocol

I developed the interview protocol (see Appendix B) based on research and literature in the field of academic advising, stress, college stressors, my own experiences in advising, and after collaborating with other academic advisors in my department and university. The protocol was designed to extract an understanding of the academic advisors' philosophy of advising, their understanding of college stressors, the intensity of these stressors, and how those could affect students and their performance in college. Another goal of the protocol was to seek recommendations on helping students deal with stressors. "Questions are at the heart of interviewing, and to collect meaningful data a researcher must ask good questions...the fewer, more open-ended your questions are the better" (Merriam, 2009, p. 126). She further elaborated by saying "good interview questions are those that are open-ended and yield descriptive data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 120) The interview protocol was designed with a focus on open-ended questions to yield this descriptive data and to generate conversation on the advisors' views on advising, experiences with stressors, and their willingness to help students deal with those stressors. Conducting pilot interviews in one of my courses helped me understand that the questions used in the interview protocol should be clear and concise. Merriam (2009) pointed out that "pilot interviews are crucial for trying out your questions. Not only do you get some practice on interviewing, about you also quickly learn which questions are confusing and need rewording" (p. 117). The interview format was semi-structured, which according to Merriam (2009) "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (p. 111). The semi-structured format helped me to dig deeper into some of the responses and extract some of the desired information.

The interview protocol was divided into three sections. The first section was a brief introduction to the study. The second section was about information on the interviewees including their gender, background, role, and experience. The third section was detailed and had 16 questions. The purpose of these questions was to understand each advisors' philosophy/intent of advising, their observation of college stressors, their views on how they can help students deal with college stressors and, if not, then what would be their recommendations.

3.4.2 Sample and Data Sources

The sample for the study was ten academic advisors in the business school including the Executive Director who were invited to participate in the study. All advisors were contacted via email requesting an interview with the researcher, and six of them responded enthusiastically that they were willing to participate in the study. The Executive Director never responded to my emails despite several reminders. The interview protocol was emailed to the advisors who were willing to participate in the study prior to the actual interview to give them an idea of what types of questions that would be asked. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher.

3.4.3 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted between September and November 2016. Advisors were contacted in early August to finalize a date and time of their interview. Each advisor was emailed the interview protocol prior to the interview so they could be prepared. After ensuring that each advisor understood the purpose of the study and their rights as volunteer participants, 60-90

minute face-to-face interviews were conducted on campus at the business school. These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed later in November 2016. I returned earlier in January to ask some follow up questions of the interviewees and requested clarifications on a few items. During the interviews, each advisor provided a rich perspective on their philosophies of advising, their workload, college stressors, and the role of advisors in their department.

To analyze the interview data for overarching themes, I first listened to the recorded interviews a few times and then transcribed them. I then reread the transcripts and started writing notes in the margins as things started to become clearer. From the notes, I started developing open codes and recorded them in an analysis table in Microsoft Excel. Once open coding was completed, I sorted the data into categories based on common connections among them. I continued to review and analyze the data as themes and patterns began to emerge.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Menter et al. (2013) suggested qualitative data analysis includes the following components:

- Codes – producing labels that allow the key points of the information to be highlighted.
- Concepts – collection of codes of similar content that allow the data to be grouped and compared and contrasted.
- Categories – broad groups of similar concepts that are used to generate a theory.
- Theory – a collection of explanations that explain the subject of the research. (p. 145)

The qualitative data analysis for this study followed the constant comparative method of data analysis developed by Glaser and Straus (1967) as the means of evolving grounded theory. Merriam (2009) defined grounded theory as a theory, which consists of categories, properties,

and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties. Following the comparative method of data analysis, for each interviewee, I conducted the interview, took field notes, documented the interview and then compared it with the results obtained from the other interviews.

These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated. The type of theory is called substantive theory—theory that applies to a specific aspect of practice. Since the theory is grounded in the data and emerges from them, the methodology is called grounded theory. (Merriam, 2009, p. 228)

3.5.1 Researcher's Reflexivity

There are two components of my identity that are relevant to the current study. First and foremost are my several years of experience working with college students in the area of academic advising, career counseling, and student affairs. I have firsthand knowledge of what students go through in college and how they struggle with college stressors. My experience is with renowned educational institutions where students are constantly challenged and where they set up high expectations for themselves. The second component is my own academic and career progression. I am an alumnus of the universities where I have personally experienced the college stressors and had to work hard to learn to manage those.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the study was limited to only one academic institution, and there is a possibility that advising practices in other institutions might differ. Second, the study was conducted in a business school while other departments could have revealed different results. Third, while the study focused on the advising process of a business school in a large urban university, it does not compare advising processes used in other schools. Finally, the study does not expect advisors to play the role of counselors. However, advisors should be able to refer the counseling resources to students if need be.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses in detail the approach that was taken to analyze the data and the process and results of the data analysis.

4.2 INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to explore academic advisors' philosophy of advising, their observations and understanding of college stressors, and to seek their recommendations on how advisors could help students deal with stressors.

4.2.1 Interview Findings

4.2.1.1 General Information About All Advisors

Each advisor meets with his or her advisees by appointment. (However, he/she has open walk-in hours during the first two weeks of classes and during the registration week.) Each appointment is 45 minutes long. Each advisor requires students to meet with him/her once a semester in order to track progress towards a degree. According to each of them, the expectation is that they advise

students academically, and there is no room for small talk. Their advising meetings are extremely structured with notes taken online that go into students' records. According to the advisors, they have several boxes to check during the meetings.

4.2.1.2 Advising Process

According to the current advising process at this large urban university's business school, students declare business as their major in the freshman year, and then each student is assigned to an advisor and stays with that advisor until he or she graduates. This may be different from other schools, such as an engineering school, where students are undeclared majors in the freshman year, and they declare their major (mechanical, chemical, civil, electrical, etc.) in their sophomore year. In such a situation, a student's advisor changes once a major is declared.

4.2.1.3 Advisor 1.

Advisor 1 is a White female who advises 220 students. She has been with the business school for 16 months, and her total years of advising experience with college students is five years. Her highest level of education is a Masters degree.

Advisor 1 described her advising approach as theory-based which she learned in graduate school. She noted that she looks at students as whole persons as much as she can in a short period of time, and she tries to be alert to all the things going on with a student and how those affect their success. Her ultimate goal is to help students to be successful. Her most important considerations in advising students are listening and being aware of their academic issues so they can graduate on time.

In terms of college stressors, she sees grades and careers as the big ones. According to her, students worry about these, because they are extremely competitive. Peer pressure also plays

an important role in creating stress among students. Her department recently did an online survey called “strength finder,” and the results showed that competitiveness was prevalent among students. Freshmen were also found to be struggling with the transition to college life. In terms of non-academic stressors, she is not aware of any personal issues with her students because she does not discuss those with them.

When asked if advisors should help students manage college stressors, her answer was “yes,” but she said that she cannot because of the large number of students:

Yes, training is important, and I had training in advising. Particularly when they hire advisors without any experience in advising. They might not have the background. Advisors should have excellent interpersonal skills. They should be people’s persons. They should help students prepare for behavioral skills. They should listen to them and help them prepare for the real world. Students are with advisors for four years so they should be trained to help these students develop and grow.

She believed that it is important that advisors are trained on how to help students deal with college stressors. Also, she said that it is very important that the universities pay special attention when they hire academic advisors, because they should have excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Such skills in advisors can help develop professional and personal development programs for students that can eventually prepare students for the real world and help them deal with stressors.

In terms of recommendations for helping students deal with college stressors, Advisor 1 recommended developing student programs at the advising level. She believed that if advisors are trained and have the skills then “they will be able to produce programs for student development, which will eventually help with stressors.”

4.2.1.4 Advisor 2.

Advisor 2 is an African American female who advises 220 students. She has been with the business school for 12 months; her total number of higher education experience is 3+ years. This is her first advising job. Her highest level of education is a Masters degree.

Advisor 2's advising approach was to provide students with information, options and opportunities to talk about their goals and how to achieve them. She helps them make academic decisions such as picking their major or electives. Her goal is to help them become marketable by providing them information that relates to their academics and careers. She noted her advising philosophy is based on her department's philosophy, which is to stay focused on student academics. Her department's philosophy is not a developmental approach. Anything beyond the scope of their role is referral. Her most important considerations in advising students are listening and being aware of their academic issues so they can graduate on time. Like Advisor 1, she said that she does not talk about students' personal issues. She mentioned that her previous job was at a small school where she was able to develop a good rapport with students. She knew them by their first names, and she was involved in several student activities, which enabled her to get to know students better.

In terms of college stressors, like Advisor 1, she sees grades and careers as the big ones. Students worry about these, because they are very competitive. She noted that about 40% of students struggle with academic stressors, and 60% of students find it hard to balance work and extra-curricular activities. Peer pressure plays an important role as well. Her department recently did an online survey called "strength finder" and the results showed that competitiveness was huge among students but freshmen were also found struggling with transition. In terms of non-

academic stressors, she is not aware of any personal issues with her students because she does not discuss those with them.

When asked if advisors should help students manage college stressors, her answer was “yes,” but she cannot because of the large number of students. She believes that it is important that advisors are trained how to help students deal with college stressors. In terms of recommendations on how advisors can help students deal with college stressors, she said that it is important that advisors also focus on students’ personal and professional development and create programs and activities so they can bring the community together and students are able to relax and learn from each other.

4.2.1.5 Advisor 3.

Advisor 3 is a White male who advises 220 students. He has been with the business school for 10 months; his higher education experience with college students totals 5 years. His highest level of education is a Masters degree. He has a pleasant personality and is very passionate about students.

Advisor 3 described his advising approach as non-developmental where his goal is to make sure that his students graduate on time. He has to follow his office’s advising approach, which is to refrain from small talk and to make sure that students are on track academically.

In terms of college stressors, he sees grades and careers as the big ones. Students worry about these, because they are very competitive. Peer pressure plays an important role as well. He noted that about 70% of students deal with academic stressors. In terms of non-academic stressors, he said that though he does not talk about personal issues with students, he believes that 30-40% of students suffer from them.

When asked if advisors should help students manage college stressors, his answer was “yes,” but he cannot because of the large number of students and also because this is not their department’s priority. He believes that it is important that advisors are trained on how to help students deal with college stressors. He noted:

In my ideal world, an advisor should be able to work with students closely and provide them with supplemental support. Advisors should be mentors and coaches not just pure academic. Advisors should be able to develop a mutual relationship and trust. Should be able to help them assess their needs and develop programs to address those needs.

4.2.1.6 Advisor 4.

Advisor 4 is a White male who advises 220 students. He has been with the business school for 20 years. His highest level of education is a Masters degree. My interview with him did not give me much information, because he was very quiet and wanted to be very precise. I tried probing in but could not get much out of him. He was not personable. When I arrived at his office, after a 30-minute walk to meet him on a hot day, I asked for a glass of water. His response was that it would take him a few minutes to walk to the kitchen to get water, and he did not seem pleased at the imposition. I politely accepted that this was too much of me to ask and proceeded with the interview.

Advisor 4 described his advising approach as making sure that students understand that undergraduate education is just the foundation of their career and life beyond college.

In terms of college stressors, he sees grades and careers as the big ones. Students worry about these because they are very competitive. Peer pressure plays an important role as well. He also talked about parent pressure on students to do a business degree instead of following their dreams such as theater, art, etc.. He noted that most students deal with academic stressors, but he

was not sure about the approximate percentage. In terms of non-academic stressors, he said that he does not talk much about personal issues with students.

When asked if advisors should help students manage the college stressors, his answer was “no,” because he believed that advisors are not their friends and should not get into personal talk with students.

4.2.1.7 Advisor 5.

Advisor 5 is an African American male who advises 220 students. He has been with the business school for 4 years and has 11 years of advising in higher education. His advising experience with college students totals 15 years. His highest level of education is a Masters degree. He was an extremely pleasant person.

Though his student meetings are purely focused on academics, he tries to use a developmental approach by personalizing the meetings and by assessing their needs. He mentioned that he always tries to put himself in student’s shoes and relate to their situations. His advising approach is to help students and understand their needs.

His advising meetings are extremely structured and there is not much room for personal talk. He takes notes online that go into students’ records. He specifically mentioned that he tries his best to have small talk with students when he sees them in the hallways and tries to develop some personal rapport, because that is really important.

In terms of college stressors, he saw academics and careers as the main ones. Students worry about these, because they are very competitive. He does not pay much attention to stressors, because he has limited time during the meetings. Peer pressure plays an important role as well. He also talked about the online survey called “strength finder” and the results showed that competitiveness was huge among students, but freshmen were also found struggling with

transition. In terms of non-academic stressors, he was not aware of any personal issues with his students because he does not discuss those with them.

When asked if advisors should help students manage the college stressors, his answer was “yes,” but he did not see it as practical because of the large number of students. He said that we can refer them but cannot directly help them. He believed that it is important that advisors are trained on understanding college students and understanding what their stressors are. Once advisors would know what those stressors are then they should develop ways to handle those.

In terms of recommendations on helping students deal with college stressors, he suggested:

I think that advisors should have comprehensive training. It's not a two-weeks thing. You have to foster a culture of consistent learning. Basically, if you learn all things that students would need then you will understand students' needs better. Encouraging advisors to take time to understand students is important. One of my roles in the past was to train graduate students for advising roles. Role-playing and scenarios will help advisors to understand students' concerns. Listening to students is crucial. Reflective listening is important. Developmental part is that you have to know what students are thinking. You have to anticipate student needs. You should have a sense of what freshmen would need. You have to have some sort of foundation. You need to understand what student issues are. Students will appreciate if you just give them time. You do not have to have a solution to every problem of them right away but if you just listen to them and offer them help.

4.2.1.8 Advisor 6.

Advisor 6 is a White male who advises 220 students. He has been with the business school for 5 years. He carries several years of experience in career counseling. His highest level of education is a Masters degree. He was a very pleasant person.

Advisor 6 described his advising approach as developmental where his goal is to help students whether academic or career-related. He believed in helping students build their confidence because he sees a lot of uncertainty with undergrads. During his meetings, he tries not to be preachy but probes them to ask questions and find solutions.

He sees about 95% of students stressed about careers. One of the college stressors that he thinks plays a very important role in students' lives is parents' pressure to find a great job since they are paying their tuition. Parents' focus is on the return of their investment. He does not see undergrads desiring to learn but rather worrying about getting jobs.

He said, "What I hear qualitatively is that they really expect that they pay this much money so there should be a job waiting for them." When asked about whether academic advisors should help students deal with college stressors, he noted:

Yeah absolutely, it is kind of reminds me of when I was doing my graduate research. There were a lot of published career development studies. What I came across was...students feel that there is something in their way. In this role, you can help students break down some barriers. If it is family, career, academic, as long as we are in this role, we have some responsibility to help them.

In terms of college stressors, he sees grades and careers as the major ones. Students worry about these because they are very competitive. Peer pressure plays an important role as well. He noted that about 70% of students deal with academic stressors. In terms of non-

academic stressors, he said that though he does not talk about personal issues with students, he believes that 30-40% of students suffer from them.

When asked if advisors should help students manage the college stressors, his answer was “yes” but he cannot because of the large number of students and also because this is not their department’s priority. He believes that it is important that advisors are trained on how to help students deal with college stressors. He noted:

In my ideal world, an advisor should be able to work with students closely and provide them with supplemental support. Advisors should be mentors and coaches not just pure academic. Advisors should be able to develop a mutual relationship and trust. Should be able to help them assess their needs and develop programs to address those needs.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

The interview findings revealed that the advisors at the business school favor an advising culture of student development and support a system where advisors should be able to help students deal with college stressors. However, they admit that they cannot successfully do that due to the current advising structure and time constraints. According to the current advising structure, advisors must follow strict guidelines, including tightly formatted advising meetings solely focused on academics and leaving little room for personal discussion or small talk. Three broad themes that emerged from the interview data were: (a) common college stressors, (b) prescriptive vs. developmental advising, and (c) students are numbers.

4.3.1 Common College Stressors: Academic and Career

The first theme that emerged from the interviews is related to common college stressors identified by the advisors. Academic stressors were the most noted ones, which is to be expected given the lack of discussion on personal issues during the advising meetings. All advisors agreed that students stress about their grades and careers. As mentioned by some advisors, about 70% of students struggle with academic stressors including grades, major selection, course completion, careers, etc.. Advisor 1 said, “Business students are focused on careers so our discussions only tend to focus on academics and job search.” While talking about the academic stressors, she further added, “All students worry about grades. They are so competitive.” Another advisor added, “Most students struggle with academic issues. I can’t comment much on non-academic stressors because we do not talk about personal issues. Within academics, students struggle mostly about making choices regarding their major and figuring out their career plans.” Advisor 3 mentioned that the majority of students take up jobs after graduation and only a small number go to graduate schools. Therefore, the job search is a primary focus for students after graduation and a source of stress. Advisor 6’s observation about students’ stressors is that most of them are concerned with careers plans.

Most advisors noted that the business students are highly competitive and peer pressure adds up to the stress levels. Advisor 1 highlighted this stressor by saying, “peer pressure is big here. It is a stressor. It is all what others are doing.” Parental involvement in a student’s life further complicates things according to a few advisors. One advisor specifically mentioned that some students pursue business degree because it is their parents’ choice. Advisor 4 said, “Sometimes students have pressure from parents to do a business degree instead of theater, because parents do not want them to wait on tables in New York City.” Advisor 6 amplified what

other advisors mentioned about parent involvement by saying:

parents are focusing on return on investment. Compared to when I was in college, it was all about learning but not too much focus on careers. What I hear qualitatively is that they really expect that they pay this much money so there should be a job waiting for them.” Parents expect a return on investment. Hence, the pressure is on students to do well and find high-paying jobs.

All advisors talked about the strength finder program that was introduced for the first time this year by the dean of the business school. This program is a survey that was circulated to all freshmen, and it revealed some of the non-academic stressors such as college transition and adjustment, homesickness, and time management as the most noted stressors.

In conclusion, the most common academic stressors are grades, major selection, careers, competitive nature of students, peer pressure, freshmen transition, and time management. Non-academic pressures are homesickness and parental pressures. All advisors could not comment much on non-academic stressors, because of the lack of rapport between students and advisors due to department’s advising philosophy.

4.3.2 Prescriptive vs. Developmental Advising

The advisors broadly defined their advising role as that of a prescriptive advisor while admitting that they would like to have a developmental approach to advising. When talking about her ideal advising approach, Advisor 1 said:

I look at the student as a whole person as much as I can in a short period of time and try to be alert to all the things going on with a student and how those affect a student’s success. The ultimate goal is to help a student and be successful.

But then when I further probed about a typical advising meeting of hers, the response was:

Advising meetings are and have to be structured, because we have notes that we do. We have forms that we fill out. That form is their academic plan. We go over everything outlined in the form. You have to stay within structure. We review their audit. We count their credits etc. They come talk to us at least once a semester. We ask them to come see us but they also approach us directly. I don't talk a lot about personal stuff.

I got similar answers from most advisors regarding the advising approach and typical advising meeting as the ones I got from Advisor 1. For example, Advisor 5 (when talking about his advising approach) mentioned that he likes to personalize the meetings and tries to take a developmental approach, because he believes in student success. However, due to time constraints, he cannot get into small talk or personal stuff:

My typical advising meeting is not overly personal. I do not get into lot of personal things with my students such as relationships, roommates, etc.. There are times when they will come up. With freshmen, I will talk about how they are adjusting, etc.. My typical appointment is how their summer was. I am not a small talker.

Lowenstein (2009) defined prescriptive advising as an approach where the advisor tells the student the actions to undertake:

He or she provides the student a list of rules and requirements. The student's responsibility is to observe (and preferably to learn) these edicts. The advisor, having provided the information, also keeps track of the student's compliance, which is why I call it bookkeeping. In this relationship, the student is passive. The flow of information is strictly in one direction. The advising process does not change the student very much, except that perhaps she or he eventually succeeds in memorizing some of the rules and

requirements.” (p. 124)

On the other hand, the developmental advising encourages students to play an active role rather than a passive role. The advisor teaches students problem-solving skills, helps them develop behavioral skills, and deals with vocational opportunities in relation to advising.

Developmental advising is a two directional dialogue (instead of a monologue) in which the student and advisor interact, and the student is an active (rather than passive participant). In the ideal case, the student is changed by the process; that is, his or her personal development is enhanced.” (Lowenstein, 2009, p. 125)

Frost (1991) argued that developmental advising unlike prescriptive advising is “concerned with human growth, cognitive, affective, career, physical, and moral personal goals and objectives. It is a goal-related activity in which goals are collaboratively established to provide direction for planning academic, career, and personal growth.” Several advisors noted in their recommendations that they would like to be part of advising programs focused on student development that also help students deal with college stressors. They also acknowledged that advisors can play an important role in helping students manage the college stressors by being mentors and coaches, by developing personal rapport and mutual relationships with students, by organizing social activities focused on students’ personal and professional development, and by assessing student needs and through understanding of their situations. However, this is not possible at the university of study because of the current advising structure in place. Advisor 2 noted, “Our department philosophy is not to have a developmental approach. I understand student developmental theory, but I cannot implement it here. Our role is to get them to graduate. Anything beyond the scope of our role is referral.”

4.3.3 Students Are Numbers

The third theme revealed in the interviews was that the students are treated as simply numbers. All advisors are required to follow their department's already established advising approach. There is no deviation from this approach. They follow a set structure where they require each student to meet with them once per semester. Each meeting is 45 minutes long, and there is a checklist to mark during the meeting. Each meeting is documented and the goal is to ensure that students graduate on time. There is no room for small talk or personalization. Most advisors clearly stated that they were following their department's philosophy of advising, which is basically managing the numbers. Several advisors mentioned during the interviews that they do not know a majority of the students by their first name because they see them only once each semester for a required meeting, and they do not get the opportunity to get to know students well.

Each advisor is assigned to about 220 students. They have open walk-in hours during the first two weeks of classes and one week prior to the registration week and during the week of registration. So the walk-in hours are for four weeks in total during the semester. Advisors are required to meet with all 220 students at least once during the semester and each meeting is 45 minutes long, meaning that advisors have five to six meetings a day. Advisor 3 said,

Advising meetings are and have to be structured. Those are every semester. We have forms that we fill out. That form is their academic plan. We go over everything outlined in the form. We review their audit. We count their credits, etc.. They come talk to us at least once a semester. During those meetings, we make sure that they are progressing towards the degree. We talk about study abroad options, careers, courses and some about

professional development opportunities such as club involvement. Since the meeting is 45 minutes long and I have to fit all 200 plus students in one semester, it is hard to talk more outside the academic.

4.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings from the interviews mostly corresponded to the research questions that initiated the current study. To summarize the findings, I will first present a discussion of each research question and then discuss the conclusions.

4.4.1 Research Question 1: How do academic advisors describe the college stressors in undergraduates' daily lives?

The first research question asked how academic advisors describe the college stressors in undergraduates' daily lives. All advisors who were interviewed agreed that college stressors exist, and they provided me a good amount of information on their observations of academic stressors among students, such as grades, major selection, careers, competitive nature of students, peer pressure, freshmen transition, time management and non-academic pressures such as homesickness, and parental pressures. They have observed these stressors via their advising meetings, or regular check in meetings with the career center or through strength finder survey.

4.4.2 Research Question 2: To what extent do academic advisors feel equipped with advising strategies to help students deal with college stressors?

The second research question asked to what extent academic advisors feel equipped with advising strategies to help students deal with college stressors? The advisors understand and acknowledge the presence of these stressors but do not feel that it is their place to talk to students about these stressors due to the time constraints and departmental advising philosophy and a set structure that they are required to follow. All of them mentioned that they are qualified and trained academically to help students deal with stressors. Advisor 1 noted, “I feel I am prepared, because I have got excellent graduate education in higher education. I took courses in academic advising. I learned advising from people involved in NACADA. I was well-educated and had also career counseling experience.”

4.4.3 Research Question 3: What kinds of training and other resources do advisors suggest for improving their capacity to address students' stressors?

The third research question asked what kinds of training and other resources do advisors suggest for improving their capacity to address students' stressors? Most advisors had great suggestions. One advisor explicitly talked about hiring academic advisors with excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Advisor 1's comment on the training aspect was:

Yes, training is important and I had training in advising. Particularly when they hire advisors without any experience in advising, they might not have the background. Advisors should have excellent interpersonal skills. They should be people's persons. They should help students prepare for behavioral skills. They should listen to them and

help them prepare for the real world. Students are with advisors for four years so they should be trained to help these students develop and grow.

Some talked about stress management workshops as part of the advising training. Some even talked about providing proper advising training to new advisors.

4.5 CONCLUSIONS

The most prominent conclusions that emerged based on the interviews and data analysis are: (a) College stressors exist and students struggle with those; (b) Academic advisors are uniquely positioned and are equipped with skills to help students to deal with stressors; and (c) The advising model in place at the university of study does not allow advisors to help students deal with stressors. Each of these conclusions will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.5.1 College stressors exist and students struggle with them

The qualitative data from the advisors' interviews revealed that college students face several types of academic stressors (grades, major selection, careers, competitive nature of students, peer pressure, freshmen transition, time management) and non-academic stressors as homesickness and parental pressures at college. The advisors expressed concern about these stressors and how students juggle all these while at college. Though the advisors expressed their concerns and admitted that they could play an important role in helping students deal with these stressors by providing them opportunities and via advising programs and activities, they could not due to the advising model in place.

4.5.2 Academic advisors are uniquely positioned and are equipped with skills to help students to deal with stressors

The second conclusion is that the academic advisors can play a very important role in students' lives by being their first, and last point of contact and all the advisors who were interviewed are qualified, trained and experienced to help students deal with college stressors. They all believe in using a developmental approach while dealing with students to help them be successful. However, they end up using a prescriptive approach to align themselves with departmental expectations.

4.5.3 Advising model in place does not allow advisors to help students deal with stressors

The Executive Director of the advising unit at the business school currently requires advisors to follow a prescriptive advising model. The expectation is that an advisor meets with each assigned student in a strictly formatted 45-minute session each semester. The benefit of this format is that it ensures that each student has equal advising access and that all of the essentials are covered. However, it also reduces advising to a simple checklist and leaves little time for personalized attention. Without flexibility to tailor advising sessions to each student as an individual, advisors have no opportunity to explore with students, understand them as people, and help them manage their stressors.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic advising should not only connect students' academic and professional worlds but also promote their personal and holistic development. In its 2016 Statement of Core Values, the National Association of Academic Advisors (NACADA) outlines the essential values that serve as the foundation for effective and meaningful advising. These values are not advising directives but rather the starting points from which advising methods and styles must emerge. While acknowledging that each advisor, each student, each school, and each situation are unique, it is important that we keep these principles in mind as we consider our data and the forthcoming recommendations.

The six core values outlined by NACADA are:

1. Advisors are responsible to the individuals they advise.
2. Advisors are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process.
3. Advisors are responsible to their institutions.
4. Advisors are responsible to higher education
5. Advisors are responsible to their educational community
6. Advisors are responsible for their professional practices and for themselves personally.

Advisors are responsible to the individuals they advise.

The organization begins by reminding advisors of their responsibility to each individual student. Each student has his own identity, background, ability, and understanding. Advisors must be always aware of that individuality and guide each student accordingly. Only in doing so

can a trusting and respectful relationship be built. This relationship between advisor and student is essential for effective and meaningful advising.

Advisors are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process.

Next, advisors are reminded of their responsibility to look beyond the advising office. It is incumbent upon each advisor to build a robust network throughout the university to best assist their advisees. Not only does this make each advisor a central resource for each student, but it also gives the advisor insight into all aspects of the university experience that might impact a student. This holistic approach leads to a more dynamic and helpful advising experience.

Advisors are responsible to their institutions.

Advisors should also be mindful that they representatives of their institutions to the students. They are responsible for following and employing the policies and procedures of their organization and exhibiting its values. Advising methods and actions should be consistent with organizational expectations.

Advisors are responsible to higher education.

Advisors are an important part of each student's education. They guide their advisees through their four-year academic journey and serve as an important resource as a liaison to the broader university and the world beyond. But advisors also have an educational responsibility to guide their students in the application of their classroom learning to their lives. In recognizing this, they also have a unique opportunity to develop programs that connect academic lessons with real-world applications.

Advisors are responsible to their educational community.

Advisors should also be sensitive to the community beyond campus. They can serve as an important link to services and opportunities locally and globally. Additionally, advisors can serve as role models through their own participation in community activities.

Advisors are responsible for their professional practices and for themselves personally.

Advisors have a responsibility to comport themselves professionally. While advisor-student relationships are important, those relationships are professional in nature and proper decorum must be followed. Student meetings should be purposeful and positive. Advisors should seek opportunities to develop themselves personally and professionally and in ways that enhance their ability to serve their students and institutions.

Viewing the results of my research (outlined in Chapter 4) in the light of NACADA's (2005) core values reveals several opportunities to improve the advising experience of the student population at this school. Where the organization makes a strong effort to ensure that all students have access to an advisor and that all essential academic advising elements are covered, it also fails to foster an atmosphere where students can develop individual and personal relationships with their advisors. Where the organization does an excellent job in its hiring of well-qualified, highly-educated, well-trained advisors, it does a poor job in allowing these advisors to make full use of their talents and training. Where the organization places a strong focus on keeping students on track toward a degree, it overlooks the possibility of contextualizing the academic experience. In essence, the organization's narrow view of advising allows it to succeed in only the strictest sense. Broadening that view would allow the advising organization to better serve its students and live up to its responsibilities as outlined in NACADA's core values and eventually reduce the stress levels of students.

To achieve this, I would like to offer the following four recommendations:

1. Make developmental advising an organizational priority;
2. Restructure the organization to reflect the commitment to developmental advising;
3. Introduce programs and activities that can help students develop as whole persons and excel personally, professionally and academically
4. Five C's of a skilled academic advisor

Make developmental academic advising an organizational priority

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) (2005) summarizes the “Concept of Advising” as:

Academic advising is integral to fulfilling the teaching and learning mission of higher education. Through academic advising, students learn to become members of their higher education community, to think critically about their roles and responsibilities as students, and to prepare to be educated citizens of a democratic society and a global community. Academic advising engages students beyond their own worldviews, while acknowledging their individual characteristics, values, and motivations as they enter, move through, and exit the institution. Regardless of the diversity of our institutions, our students, our advisors, and our organizational structures, academic advising has three components: curriculum (what advising deals with), pedagogy (how advising does what it does), and student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising). (NACADA, 2005, n. p.)

With this in mind, my first recommendation is to commit the organization to adopting a developmental advising approach.

Developmental Academic Advising is defined as a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational, career, and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community

resources. It both stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life. Developmental advising relationships focus on identifying and accomplishing life goals, acquiring skills and attitudes that promote intellectual and personal growth, and sharing concerns for each other and for the academic community. Developmental academic advising reflects the institution's mission of total student development and is most likely to be realized when the academic affairs and student affairs divisions collaborate in its implementation" (Winston, Miller, Ender, & Grites, 1984, pp. 18–19).

A commitment to this approach will allow the organization to meet its current academic and organizational objectives while also aiding in the complete development of individual students.

Restructure the organization to reflect the commitment to developmental advising:

"If the organizational structure is not a good fit for the institution or its students and faculty, the advising program's effectiveness could be limited and student satisfaction with the service could be adversely affected" (Pardee, 2004, n. p.).

Having committed the organization to a developmental advising approach, it is imperative that a revised structure be put into place to ensure effectiveness. One essential area of change for this organization would be to reduce the student load for each advisor through an expansion of the advising team. Advisor interviews made clear that there is very little time for open, fluid conversation with students. These moments of informal conversation provide the catalyst for real discovery and the structure of the organization must allow time for these moments to happen.

Time alone cannot solve the problem, however. It is also important that the recruiting process includes special attention to behavioral skills. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills are crucial for an academic advisor to be successful. In order for advisors and

students to build strong personal rapport, students should feel comfortable approaching the advisors in formal and informal situations. As relationships develop, advisors develop a more complete understanding of their students as individuals and can more confidently and appropriately guide them in ways that reduce their stress.

In order to accomplish this fully, the organization must offer supportive training and development opportunities.

Regardless of the persons who provide academic advising at any institution, the success or failure of efforts depends upon a strong training and professional development program. Anyone assisting students with academic curricula, course registration, relationship building, and general or specific student success services must receive continuous support in the form of training and development." (Voller, 2011, n. p.)

The organization should offer comprehensive-training programs specifically designed to enhance their new developmental advising approach. This would include everything from pre-service training for new advisors to continuous professional training and development programs for experienced advisors. In addition to academic and career challenges, well-trained advisors will be knowledgeable of the ways in which stress might manifest itself and how best to assist students who are struggling to manage it.

In short, to achieve success with a developmental advising approach, the organization must build a complete advising structure that reflects its commitment to the whole student.

Introduce programs and activities that can help students develop as whole persons and excel personally, professionally and academically

In order to help students manage college stressors, it is important that advising units assess their students' needs and develop programs and activities that can benefit students during

their four years and eventually reduce their stress levels. First of all, a comprehensive advising plan should be designed and implemented from freshman year to graduation. The advising plan should be implemented and managed by the academic advisors, which will give them an opportunity to get to know their students outside the typical advising meetings. One advantage of the advising plan is that students will have one on one attention from their advisors, which will reduce the stress of figuring out everything on their own. The advising plan should look like this:

- *Freshman Orientation Program*: One of the stressors found in this research study is freshman year adjustment as a result of being away from home. Though universities offer university-wide orientation programs at the beginning of the year, advising units of each school within the university should also create an orientation program for its students. These programs should be designed specific to each academic program. For example, a business school should create an orientation program that includes information on resources available to business students, plan of study, upperclassmen's college experiences and how they managed those, short one-on-one advising meetings with their advisors in order for students to get to know their advisors right from the beginning, and assurance that the school cares for them.
- *Freshman Personal and Professional Development Colloquium*: This course should be a required part of the curriculum and should be graded as pass/fail. The Freshman Colloquium should take place over multiple sessions throughout freshman year. Through this course, students in their respective course of study will be able to explore and engage in discussions/activities on current trends in their industry, personal and career-based skills and knowledge, and the importance of civility and integrity in business discourse. The learning outcomes of this course should include development of behavioral skills in

preparation of careers, skills necessary for a lifetime of personal growth, development of personal and social, and preparation to manage the academic and professional careers. Such a course will help students prepare better for the future and reduce their anxiety for academic and career preparations.

- *Personal and Professional Development Ongoing Series:* In addition to the Freshman Colloquium, the advising unit should offer a series of programs and activities focused on students' personal and professional development throughout their college stay. These activities should provide students opportunities to develop and grow and may include mentoring and networking programs with upperclassmen, alumni and recruiters, community conversations, faculty and alumni interactions, company visits, involvement in student run clubs and organizations, learning etiquette of dining, dressing, and other social and professional behaviors.
- *Parental Education:* When acknowledging the outsized role parents have on their children, it is important to consider educating parents on the rigors and challenges of undergraduate education and how they might best help their children. Perhaps, a monthly parent newsletter can help achieve this. The newsletter should contain information on programs, activities, student highlights, and links to resources available to students.

Five C's of a skilled academic advisor

My final recommendation is to consider the five C's of a skilled academic advisor as defined by Gordon et al. (2000 when recruiting and retaining academic advisors. The five C's are outlined as follows:

1. Competence
2. Confidence building

3. Cordially
4. Credible
5. Creative. (p. 359)

The obvious and most important skill needed in an academic advisor is being competent. It is crucial that academic advisors have firsthand knowledge of the institutional and departmental policies, degree requirements, and course planning. According to Gordon et al., the advisor must be a confidence-builder for students. “Through effective questioning, skillful reflection, and modeling appropriate behaviors, the advisor should assist students in gaining both confidence and understanding of self within the academic environment” (Gordon et al., 2000, p. 350). The authors further note that it is important that advisors act cordially, and that being kind is a foundation on which trust and confidence between the two parties begin to be built.

In my experience, students do not care how much an advisor knows. What they really care is how much an advisor cares. Being cordial and credible sets an advisor apart from others. The fourth C is credibility, which is of great importance. “Academic advisors must continually work to be well informed, connected to key personnel on campus, and respected for their work as an advisor.” (Gordon et al., 2000, p. 350). Being creative is an important trait in an advisor, because a creative advisor according to Gordon et al. can help students in exploring issues previously not considered and can assist students connect to resources and personnel that are new and unknown. An advisor who is competent and knowledgeable, cares for students and is there to provide them with a helping hand is well-respected and is creative can also help students deal with stressors and suggest them resources and point them in the right direction.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Because academic advising plays an integral role in the personal and professional development of college students and because students struggle with college stressors, it is necessary to continue researching the ways to help students manage stress through academic advising. One suggestion is to look into the possibility of conducting a research study on international business schools and make a comparison with business schools in U.S.

As part of the EdD program requirements, I chose to do a global studies summer internship in an international business school in France during the summer of 2016. The purpose of this opportunity was to study a business program in an international setting, compare and contrast that program with my own experience, and to discover potential new advising approaches to bring back to my current practice. During the internship, I explored the development of effective academic advising strategies for undergraduate business student success.

I believe that comparing two distinct student populations enriched my learning about advising strategies. In particular, a comparative study of an international business school enabled me to explore the rigors of the undergraduate business program and academic advising practices in an international environment. My observations and discussions with management at a business school in France revealed that, while the end goal for students is the same, which is student success, business schools in both countries take significantly different approaches toward achieving that goal.

Based on my experiences and research, the undergraduate business programs in the U.S heavily focus on the academic development of its students with significant emphasis on career

and professional development. On the other hand, the undergraduate business schools in France heavily focus on graduate studies after graduation instead of careers.

Another interesting feature of academic advising in business schools in France was a heavy focus on mentoring and coaching to supplement academic advising. In reviewing the similarities and differences between the schools after visiting the business school in France, I noticed that the stressors that are prominent in each school differ in relation to their post-graduation plans. The students in the U.S. tend to worry most about those factors that might influence their internship and job prospects. The undergraduate business students in France worry more about those things that might influence their acceptance at a quality graduate program. Student concerns combined with the reality of their likely post-graduation plans leads the advising program at each school in a different direction.

Another important factor that I noticed was that the mentoring and coaching program in the business school in France seemed to be very effective and could be adapted to the needs of the undergraduate business schools in the U.S. This sort of program would allow for greater personalization and assessment based on individual students.

Another recommendation for future research is to look into an assessment process for advisors' skills. The current study concludes that advisors in this large urban university believe that they are equipped with skills to help students deal with college stressors but developing a more formal assessment process would help determine whether those skills are present and what skills need to be refined or added to each advisor's portfolio.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the literature review discussed in this study and the data collected reveal that stress among college students exists and that advisors play an important role in students' lives, the study still has some limitations that must be recognized. The limitations of the study are listed below:

- The study was limited to only one academic institution, and there is a possibility that advising practices in other institutions might differ.
- The study was conducted in a business school while other departments could have revealed different results.
- While the study focused on the advising process of a business school in a large urban university, it does not compare advising processes used in other schools.
- The study does not expect advisors to play the role of counselors. However, advisors should be able to refer the counseling resources to students if need be.

APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTIVE VS. DEVELOPMENTAL ADVISING

Descriptive vs. Developmental Advising	
Descriptive	Developmental
Advisor tells student what he/she needs to know about programs and courses.	Advisor helps student learn about courses and programs for self.
Advisor knows college policies and tells student what to do.	Advisor tells student where to learn about policies and helps in understanding how they apply to him/her
Advisor tells student what schedule is best.	Advisor teaches student how to register self.
Advisor informs about deadlines and follows up behind	Advisor informs about deadlines then lets students follow up.
Advisor tells student which classes to take.	Advisor presents class options; student makes own selection.
Advisor takes responsibility for keeping advising file	Advisor and student share responsibility for file.
Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through files and records.	Advisor keeps informed about academic progress through records and talking to student about academic experiences.
Advisor tells student what to do in order to get advised.	Advisor and student reach agreement about nature of advising relationship.
Advisor uses grades and test results to determine courses most appropriate for student.	Advising and student use grades, test results, and self-determined interests and abilities to determine most appropriate courses.
Advisor specifies alternatives and indicates best choice when student faces difficult decision.	Advisor assists student in identifying alternatives and weighing consequences when facing difficult decision.
Advisor takes care of academic problems.	Advisor teaches student problem-solving techniques.

Figure 1. Descriptive vs. Developmental Advising

Advisor does not deal with vocational opportunities in	Advisor deals with vocational opportunities in conjunction with advising.
Advisor suggests what student should major in.	Advisor suggests steps student can take to help decide on a major.
Advisor identifies realistic academic goals based on grades and test results	Advisor assists student in identifying realistic academic goals based on grades, test results, and self-understanding.
Advisor is not knowledgeable about help available with non-academic concerns.	Advisor is knowledgeable about available help for non-academic concerns.
Advisor does not encourage discussion of personal problems.	Advisor encourages discussion of personal problems.
Advisor is concerned mainly about academic life of student.	Advisor is concerned about personal, social, and academic life of student.
Advisor unaware of student's outside-the-classroom life.	Advisor shows interest in student's out-of-class life. Advisor discusses academic and other-than-academic interests and plans.
Advisor provides information mainly about courses and class schedules.	Advisor provides information about workshops and seminars in areas such as career planning and study skills, and courses and class schedules.
Advisor does not spend much time discussing time management and study techniques	Advisor spends time discussing time management and effective study techniques.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this study is to propose recommendations for an innovative academic advising program to help students deal with college stressors associated with their academic, extra-curricular, social, career and personal experiences. The study focuses on college stressors among undergraduate business students and the perceptions by academic advisors of their capacity to identify these stressors and help students accordingly.

Information about the interviewer

Gender:

Type of School (Business, Engineering, Computing, etc.):

Role (Advisor/Counselor/Faculty Advisor):

Number of years advising students:

Interview Questions

1. Describe your approach to advising? (Philosophy/purpose/intent) How did you develop your

approach?

2. What do you see as the most important considerations in advising students?
3. How many students are you advising and is this a manageable number for you?
4. How often do you meet with your advisees? Do you require meetings or are those optional?
5. Describe a typical advising meeting. Do your advising meetings only focus on academic issues or do you also personalize the meetings by discussing their career aspirations, social activities and personal interests? Are advising meetings structured and standard or more informal and individual?
6. Of the students you advise at this college, what approximate percentage is struggling with academic oriented college stressors such as academic workload, extracurricular activities, career plans, or others? And what approximate percentage is struggling with non-academic stressors such as financial issues, personal issues, or others?
7. Of the two areas just mentioned, academic stressors and non-academic, which do you find students struggle with most and why do you think that is?
8. Of the academic college stressors just mentioned (academic workload, extracurricular activities, career planning, or others you mentioned) and the non-academic stressors (financial issues, personal issues or others you mentioned) which, do you find the most prevalent and why do you think that is?
9. Do you believe that academic advisors should help students manage the college stressors and if yes, how so?

10. If not, what is your reasoning?
11. Do you feel you are prepared to help students deal with college stressors?
12. Do you think that advisors should be trained on how to help students deal with college stressors?
13. How much training have you had in this area?
14. What are your recommendations on helping students deal with college stressors? Are there any programs or activities that you would like to recommend which could help students deal with college stressors and be successful?
15. Do you think that your department offers adequate resources to help students manage college stressors?
16. Are there any systems university-wide that needs to be changed to help students manage the college stressors well?

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