

# CAREER ADVISING AS AN INSTITUTIONAL MODEL OF ACADEMIC

## ADVISING: A CASE STUDY

by

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(Under the Direction of Laura Dean)

### ABSTRACT

Many college students need assistance as they navigate academic, departmental, and university requirements necessary to complete a degree. Many students also require assistance in connecting academic learning to their vocational interests. Although academic advising and career development are both necessary to student success, academic advising functions and career development processes most often occur independently of one another on college campuses. Career advising is a model that combines academic advising and career counseling processes to emphasize relationships between educational choice and general career field to help students form appropriate academic and career goals based on this information. This dissertation used a qualitative single case study research design to gain an understanding of how one college chose the career advising model of academic advising, including exploring decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a more traditional model of advising to career advising. This qualitative approach allowed an opportunity to discover and examine why such decisions were made, how the change process occurred, how such a change affected the structure and function of the advising

office, and staff impressions regarding the success of the model, in an effort to provide guidance for institutions that may wish to restructure their own advising program toward career advising. Implications for other institutions considering this model of advising were discussed and future research ideas identified.

**INDEX WORDS:** Career advising, Academic advising, Advising models

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

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August 2015

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Mark and Ruth Hopkins. To my father, who sees the possibilities in just about every situation, who believed that I would complete a doctorate years before I was sold on the idea, and who was a higher education professional through whom I found my own calling, I would like to say thank you for paving the way and providing the inspiration. To my mother, who is always able to identify what is practical and useful in a way that helps focus my mind when I struggle, who was an ear when I needed to verbally process what I was working on, and who provided both moral support and strategic nudging throughout the production of this dissertation, I would like to say thank you for being my firm foundation. Thank you both for making this possible!

This work is also dedicated to higher education professionals for whom the field is a calling rather than a job and who work very hard to make a difference in students' lives. It is easy to lose the message amidst life's daily frustrations, but never doubt that what you do matters.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I believe that people are stronger together, and, as Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” I owe much to those who supported and encouraged me during the course of this undertaking. I would like to thank my husband, Matt Mason, for frequently reminding me that we were in this together. Although your optimism confounds me from time to time, it kept me going when our world was a lot more difficult and frustrating than we wanted it to be. You always knew exactly when I needed a good laugh! To my family and friends, I would like to offer my appreciation for the words of encouragement along the way. Among the many, Michael Anderson has been a constant, kind, and compassionate cheerleader without whose support this process would have been infinitely more difficult.

I would like to also take this opportunity to thank all who served on my committee: Dr. Laura Dean, Dr. Merrily Dunn, Dr. William McDonald, Dr. Richard Mullendore, and Dr. Diane Cooper. Each exemplify the best of what higher education professionals should be, and I am grateful that all of you took the time to serve. Dr. Dean, in particular, provided exceptional support and understanding, particularly when work was overwhelming and my energy flagged. I greatly appreciate your guidance.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many college students, regardless of degree program, have a need for assistance as they navigate the academic, departmental, and university requirements necessary to complete a degree. At the same time, many students also require assistance in connecting academic learning to the world of work. Although both are necessary to student success, academic advising functions and career development processes most often occur independently of one another. In many cases, services associated with each are administered by different divisions within a university, further limiting the possibility of connecting advising and career development together in service to students (Gordon, 2006). Regardless of where or how academic advising and career development processes occur, both have also been shown to be of significant importance to student retention and progression over the course of an academic degree program (Cuseo, n.d.; Drake, 2011; Hughey, Burton Nelson, Damminger, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009; Tinto, 2000). Research also indicates that career preparation is of significant importance to today's student (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2008). It seems clear that the impact of combining academic advising and career development could therefore be even more significant.

In 1909, Frank Parsons proposed a three-step model for vocational guidance that fostered efforts to understand methods for identifying individual differences, occupations, and processes for decision-making (Herr, 2013). Parson's ideas spawned an interest in

vocational guidance and vocation education, resulting in subsequent research into, and theories of, what is now known as career development (Herr, 2013). Although career development can be defined in a number of ways, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, and Herma (1951) were the first to define the concept of career development. Initially, they suggested that occupational choice was a process that occurred over a number of years and was completed by early adulthood. Later, Ginzberg (1984) revised the initial definition, extending the process throughout the lifespan. Sears (1982) defined career development as a combination of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that are combined together over an individual's life span. Zunker (1994) noted that the terms career development, occupational development, and vocational development are often used interchangeably, but that each can be used to refer to the lifelong process of developing beliefs, values, skills, interests, personality characteristics, and knowledge of the world of work. Niles and Harris-Bowelsbey (2005) described career development as "the lifelong psychological and behavioral processes as well as contextual influences shaping one's career over the life span" (p. 12).

### **Defining Career Development**

Although career development can be defined in a number of ways, the developmental process, itself, refers to intrapersonal changes in an individual and is assisted by career counselors on college campuses. Career counselors help college students use self-knowledge, knowledge of the world of work, and decision-making skills as learning tools to foster career management over the lifespan (DeBell, 2001; Whiston, 2000).

The Career Services Standards published by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2012) identified that “Through CS or other units, the institution must offer career advising, counseling, and education that assist designated clients at any state of their career development to

- clarify interests, competencies, values, experiences, personal characteristics, and desired lifestyles using appropriate assessment tools
- explore occupational, educational, and employment possibilities
- make reasoned, informed educational and career decisions and plans based on accurate self-knowledge and occupational information
- establish short-term and long-term career goals.” (CAS, 2012, p. 144)

In the *National Association of Colleges and Employers Professional Standards for College & University Career Services* (2013), a number of suggestions are offered for development of a mission statement for career services offices. Among the recommendations are

- select personally suitable academic programs and experiential opportunities that optimize future educational and employment options
- take responsibility for developing career decisions, graduate/professional school plans, employment plans, and/or job-search competencies
- link with alumni, employers, professional organizations, and others who will provide opportunities to develop professional interests and competencies, integrate academic learning with work, and explore future career possibilities. (p. 5)

Crites (1981) framed career counseling as an interpersonal process focused upon assisting an individual to make an appropriate career decision. Chung and Gfroerer (2003) defined career counseling as helping clients identify their skills to make better career choices so that they can become more productive and valuable workers. Other researchers have emphasized the counseling and coaching competencies required to help guide clients toward appropriate skills development, information collection, values clarification, decision-making dexterity, and life balance (Hughey, Nelson, Damming, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009).

### **Defining Academic Advising**

Academic advising, however, has traditionally been seen as less “counseling” or “skills development” oriented and, instead, considered primarily a prescriptive process through which students achieve academic goals (Crookston, 1972). However, this “prescriptive process” has broadened and deepened over the past two decades toward a more developmental, goal-oriented, planning-based structure that is considerably more reminiscent of a career counseling process (Gordon, 2006). The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 2004) stated that the goals of academic advising are to “teach students to understand the meaning of higher education, teach students to understand the purpose of the curriculum, and to foster students’ intellectual and personal development toward academic success and lifelong learning” (p. 1). This newer definition implies that the academic advising process has a more encompassing influence and far-reaching impact than traditionally assigned (Gordon, 2006).

The aspirations, goals, and plans that students bring with them to college may bear no resemblance to the final picture at graduation. We know that students change

their minds as they gain knowledge, encounter new experiences, and form identities that are separate from familial influences (Gordon, 2006). As students' needs change, the assistance they require from academic advisors and career counselors also changes.

McCollum (1998) stated that the challenge is to meet an advisee's developmental needs, regardless of whether they are emotional, academic, or career oriented. Helping a student choose classes for an upcoming semester without having an adequate understanding of their general career goals is as limiting for that student as providing counseling about a specific career path without knowledge of the student's degree plans and academic options (Burton-Nelson, 2006; King, 1993). As such, academic advisors must have an understanding of basic career development processes and an ability to apply that knowledge to their work with students. So too must career counselors have an understanding of the academic connections related to career choice and an ability to apply that knowledge to their work with students (Gordon, 2006). For academic advisors, the answer to this conundrum may be career advising.

### **Defining Career Advising**

Career advising is an academic advising model that combines advising and career counseling processes to emphasize the relationship between educational choice and general career field, including how personal interests, abilities, and values relate to academic and career paths, and how to form appropriate academic and career goals based on this information (Gordon, 2006). Gordon (2006) further described career advising as a dynamic, interactive process that helps students understand how each of these might predict success in the academic and career fields they are considering. By combining elements of career counseling with academic advising, a practitioner is more able to meet

the student's academic needs, enhance learning, and contribute to the preparation of future life goals (Burton Nelson, 2006). Hughey, Nelson, Damming, and McCalla-Wriggins (2009) indicated that an academic advisor who can respond to relevant factors that influence career choices is able to concurrently contribute to students' basic career development. Habley (1984) stated that career and life planning processes are inextricably woven into the function of academic advising. However, the extent to which career and academic advising processes are integrated into the operational processes of an academic advising center depends on a variety of factors. For example, an advisor's knowledge and competency in both student development and career development theories, or personal views about adding a career development element to the role and responsibility of academic advising, can internally influence integration. Externally, the views of other student affairs staff and their perspectives about the purview of an advisor, or the institutional philosophy of academic advising and the role of advisors, may influence integration. Further, office structure and practical considerations, such as limited numbers of advising staff or limited support for moving toward the integration of career development into academic advising, will ultimately determine how well, or even if, a career advising model will be used in an advising center (Gordon, 2006).

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore the career advising program at a single institution in order to learn about the decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a more traditional model of advising to career advising. The ultimate goal of the study was to discover and examine why and how such decisions were made, how the change process occurred, how such a change

affected the structure and function of the advising office, and staff impressions regarding the success of the model, in an effort to provide guidance for institutions that may wish to restructure their own advising program toward the career advising model of advisement. Bolman and Deal's (1991) frameworks for understanding organizations and leadership provided additional perspective on how operational structure influences successful programmatic change.

To foster the necessary discovery and examination of the case, the researcher explored a primary broad research question and five specific sub-questions that addressed separate elements of the broader question:

Broad Research Question: What was the experience of an institution that moved from a traditional academic advising model to career advising?

Research Question 1: What factors led the institution to consider moving from the former model of academic advising to career advising?

Research Question 2: What decision-making process occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising?

Research Question 3: What implementation processes occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising?

Research Question 4: Based on the experiences of practitioners at this institution, which administrative decision-making processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising?

Research Question 5: Based on the experiences of practitioners at this institution, which administrative implementation processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising?

Subsequent supporting procedural questions further probed how the change affected the structure and function of the advising office itself, the impact on staff, and staff impressions of the success of the model.

### **Design and Overview of Study**

This study employed qualitative case study research in order to develop a better understanding of the issues surrounding a single institution's career advising decision making and implementation process and experiences. The case, in this study, was a university, located in the central United States, which has been using the career advising model of advisement for a number of years. While a number of staff members were involved in the inquiry, primary emphasis was placed on participation by upper administration, office leadership, advisors, and other staff members who were involved in the decision making and implementation processes used to reconstitute services as career advising. The sources of data collected consisted of individual and group interviews, observations, and documents related to the case. The researcher analyzed data as it was collected and continued to analyze data both simultaneously and after collection until complete. After all data was collected and analyzed, the researcher produced a written analysis of data gathered, including staff experiences, observations, and any available documentation.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A significant amount of academic advising research exists, but because specific research for the career advising model of academic advising is sparse, support for its use must be identified in other ways. This chapter will review the history of academic advising within the overall evolution of higher education and, in doing so, will not only identify why academic advising is necessary within higher education, but also examine the rationale for implementing career advising within the current framework of higher education.

#### **A Brief History of Academic Advising**

Although research regarding the use of career advising as a model for the academic advising process is sparse, support for it can be found within literature that illuminates both the history of, and commonly held standards within, academic advising. An examination of the history and evolution of academic advising reveals the earliest roots of the integration of elements of career development within the process.

Although a number of researchers have included basic historical information about academic advising within existing academic advising literature, Cook (2009), Gordon (2006), and White and Lindhorst (2011) are the researchers who have produced the most detailed information regarding the history of academic advising. While Cook (2009) has primarily chronicled growth and change within higher education as a means to conjoin developments within academic advising to higher education's evolution, Gordon

(2006) has used the historical path of academic advising to support academic advising as a dynamic field, with additional support to each provided by White and Lindhorst (2011). As higher education diversified in both curricula and student population, as well as in structure, size, and formation, so too did the process of academic advising (White & Lindhorst, 2011). The origins of academic advising can be found in the first institutions of higher education in the United States.

**The earliest academic advising processes.** The origins of higher education in the United States began in Colonial times. Access to higher education was restricted, primarily, to financially privileged, Caucasian males. At the same time, higher education was largely focused on academic curricula surrounding medicine and the ministry (Cook, 2009; White & Lindhorst, 2011).

Rudolph (1990) and Thelin (2011) disagreed with this characterization of the academic focus, indicating, instead, that there are few written records to really reconstruct a colonial curriculum. However, Rudolph (1990) and Thelin (2011) both agreed that while admissions standards were a bit fluid, most students were required to be conversant in classical languages, ancient authors, and higher levels of mathematics. Admission most often included a verbal exam given by the president of the institution. Thelin (2011) identified that the collegiate environment included a breadth of learning and scholarly inquiry, using mentors and tutors to foster learning.

Thelin (2011) did, however, agree more fully with assertions made by Cook and by White and Lindhorst regarding the type of students served. Thelin (2011) stated that less than one percent of the population attended college, making college attendance “exclusive” in the modern sense of the word. He used Yale College as an example,

stating that it conferred only 18 bachelors degrees in 1707. In addition to finding few students with the classical training and education required for collegiate success, the institution itself was designed to highlight social class. Similarly, the College of Rhode Island opened in 1765 with one student and, two years later, had reached a total enrollment of just 10 students. (Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, 2011). Thelin (2011) described the social composition of higher education as “homogenous with clear reminders of social class” (p. 23). Instead of alphabetizing students, college rolls were organized by family rank. The largest proportion of students were the regional elite, from prosperous families, devoutly Christian, and expected to be serious about study. Students wore robes to show family rank, with long robes for those from wealthy families and short robes for scholarship students. Sons from prosperous families were not expected to work in the family business from an early age, unlike their less wealthy counterparts who were expected to help manage the workload. A successful family enterprise could easily flourish without the extra work energy, although most students from prosperous families were expected to join the family business after college, eventually taking over and perpetuating the family success into the future (Thelin, 2011).

The primary purpose of higher education was not directly connected to the development of a career. It was, instead, intended to support the colonial social order (Rudolph, 1990). Influential leaders of the time believed that parents did not always provide the kind of upbringing required to form the influential leaders of the future. Therefore, they thought that socialization and higher education should be provided via formal instruction rather than by the family (Thelin, 2011). Rudolph (1990) identified the purpose of higher education as creating strong male adults, ministers, government

officials, and scholars. Thelin (2011) further indicated that higher education was meant to help privileged sons acquire a sense of responsibility and public service, becoming an “insurance policy” guaranteeing literacy and a sense of leadership and service (p. 25). King’s College described this purpose in its institutional mission as providing future leaders with an education that would “enlarge the Mind, improve the Understanding, polish the whole Man, and qualify them to support the brightest Characters in all the elevated stations in life” (as cited in Thelin, 2011, p. 26).

In the 1700s, academic advising was not defined and was, instead, incorporated as a part of the general work tasks customarily assigned to a university president, dean, or other such administrator charged with supervising the students entrusted to their care (Cook, 2009). These administrators acted *in loco parentis*, providing academic advice and ensuring adherence to institutional regulations, while also assisting students in making choices about extracurricular activities, moral lifestyle, and intellectual habits (Cook, 2009; Gordon, 2006). Using this approach to serving students, the administrator not only influenced and monitored student academic performance, but also influenced and monitored personal behavior and comportment within the confines of the societal mores of the day (Cook, 2009).

When an overall student population is small, and degree programs are limited to a narrowly defined cadre of classes, academic advising can be similarly bound while still meeting the needs of those served. Ultimately, the advising process simply ensured that students were performing successfully and closely connected with a faculty member (Cook, 2009). Academic advising existed without form or definition until the mid-1800s.

Between the late 1700s and the Civil War in the 1860s, significant changes occurred in education, in both numbers of institutions and types of institutions. Unlike the 1700s, students began to stay for a full degree, rather than attending for a year or two of personal development (Thelin, 2011). In the year 1800, there were 25 degree-granting institutions. In 1820, that number had more than doubled to 52 institutions. By 1860, there were 241 institutions of higher learning. In addition to the “classical” structure of education adopted from England, specialized institutions with a variety of educational models were founded. Universities, academies, seminaries, scientific schools, normal schools, and institutes were developed to address specific types of education. This narrowed the broad, liberal scope of education toward a practical, more prescribed curriculum of academic majors, including medicine, law, engineering, military science, commerce, theology, agriculture, and education (Thelin, 2011). Several of the newer institutions were created to serve formerly excluded populations, such as women and, later, freed slaves (Rudolph, 1990).

In the early 1860s, the end of the Civil War brought freed slaves into the greater workforce, requiring that this previously uneducated group be trained for additional career paths (Thelin, 2011). The Morrill Act of 1862 also significantly influenced growth and change within higher education. The Morrill Act was significant in that it introduced federal government into educational policy, with the creation of land-grant universities. This legislation provided an opportunity for the development of colleges and universities in many locales where access to higher education had been limited. Further, the legislation supported a “broad, utilitarian education” of agriculture, mechanics, mining, and military instruction, region by region (Thelin, 2011, p. 75).

During this time of educational evolution, changes also occurred in academic advising. By the 1850s, advising began to develop structure and form, a process that coincided with changes occurring in the higher education system at large. Curricular changes toward more practical learning required additional understanding of changing degree programs. By the mid-1800s, higher education options for women began to develop and, in some cases, existing institutions became co-educational (Cook, 1999), while higher education options for men and women of color were established (Thelin, 2011).

During this time period, female deans, faculty, and other staff were employed to work specifically with new female populations and corresponding academic curricula. (Cook, 1999). Administrators and educators of color were needed to support the education of men and women of color (Thelin, 2011). In both cases, those hired were also expected to take on academic advising duties.

The responsibilities of those employed to work with students began to transform into more clearly defined work tasks, separating academic needs from extracurricular and personal growth needs. As a part of this transformation, academic advising began the move from one of many tasks handled by administrators toward a discrete educational function requiring specially trained staff (Cook, 1999). The first known formal system of academic advising was introduced at Kenyon College (Ohio) in 1841. In this model of academic advising, each student was teamed with a faculty member who served as an academic advisor, while other staff continued to act *in loco parentis* toward social and personal development (Cook, 2009; White & Lindhorst, 2011).

By the late 1800s, academic curricula had broadened further to include both course electives and additional academic majors, creating complexity of choice within degree programs. As such, staff working with students to determine academic direction and scope needed specialized knowledge of those options (Cook, 2009). In 1876, the first formal systems of faculty advising began, followed by the landmark creation of a “Chief of Faculty Advising” position at Johns Hopkins University in 1889 and the development of “Boards of Freshman Advising” structures at a number of institutions across the country (Cook, 2009). Although it remained largely prescriptive in nature, by the turn of the century academic advising had gained definition as a discreet process and was seen as necessary to the success of students enrolled in college degrees (Cook, 1999; Gordon, 2006).

Higher education structurally matured between 1880 and 1910. Institutions were strengthened financially, with the support of donors led by business leaders. In 1900, presidents of 14 colleges met, forming the first incarnation of the Association of American Universities (AAU) (Thelin, 2011). The purpose of the AAU meeting was to create uniformity in the various degree levels offered at American universities, to improve the world’s opinion of American doctoral degrees, and to help raise standards at what were considered the weaker institutions in the U.S., in an effort to guarantee the value of the American university system against less expensive foreign competition (Association of American Universities, 2013).

Between 1880 and 1910, characteristics that would eventually be associated with what are considered the great, modern, American universities began to emerge (Thelin, 2011). Thelin (2011) described the great, modern, American universities as institutions

that became the charitable focus of wealthy donors. This philanthropy included large-scale, private endowments as well as state appropriations. Additional characteristics included a presidential presence in which an institution's leader was enterprising and able to interact with politicians, industrial leaders, and academic scholars, as well as a professional professorate where instructors were viewed as experts in their fields, with rank and promotion, and with academic freedom. Further, higher education moved toward a common pedagogy that included lecture and small seminar groups to discuss topical research, as well as large libraries, museums, observatories, laboratories, fieldwork, and off-site research expeditions. Thelin (2011) further described that higher education developed professional schools and began to sequence the curriculum in such a way that undergraduate academic units certified students as ready for professional and graduate education.

### **Academic Advising in the 1900s**

As higher education continued to change, spawning a breadth and complexity of curricula, those charged with guiding students through academic requirements and institutional regulations also required specialization and a greater understanding of changing curricula (Hughey, Nelson, Damminger, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Dean of Women and Dean of Men roles began to include academic progression and the resolution of problems with the support of departmental faculty (Cook, 1999).

From 1920 to 1945, the United States formed a commitment to overall mass higher education. Post-World War I, institutions of higher learning added larger and more complex facilities (Rudolph, 1990). Thelin (2011) singled out the phenomenon of

building football stadiums as uniquely pointing toward the American public's commitment to, and interest in, higher education. Many chose 'their' team and attended large-scale athletic competitions.

In 1917, fewer than five percent of students aged 18 – 20 attended college. In 1937, 15% attended (Thelin, 2011). Thelin (2004, 2011) also identified that the increase in numbers of high schools and the greater rate of high school completion during this time created more college aspirants. Between World War I and World War II, enrollments increased five-fold from approximately 250,000 students to 1.3 million (Thelin, 2004, 2011).

Post-World War I institutions began training staff to help faculty with the academic advising process. While advising remained a prescriptive process, service providers began to incorporate student feelings, attitudes, and aptitude for study into the process. Advising was defined and purposeful but had not yet been fully examined in terms of scope and function (Cook, 1999).

While education continued to diversify, so did staff roles. The Student Personnel Point of View (1949) identified a number of areas of service in which additional staff might be required, or in which existing staff roles might need to be expanded. Some of these include services supporting student orientation, testing and appraisal, residence halls, counseling, vocational development, and recreational needs. Individuals providing guidance to students began to shift toward specific categories of service. Some staff specialized in academic advising while others shifted toward psychological counseling and vocational counseling (Cook, 1999). This was the first time in the history of U.S. higher education that a single staff member did not encompass all three roles, and

academic advising was separated from personal and social growth support and vocational guidance.

The era from 1945 to 1970 is considered the “Golden Age” of higher education with the triple benefits of “prosperity, prestige, and popularity” fostering significant growth in student numbers, in curricular changes, and in sustained financial support from previously limited or spotty governmental support (Thelin, 2011, p. 260). In 1939-1940, there were approximately 1.5 million students. In 1945-1950, that number increased to 2.7 million, with the next decade adding nearly 1 million more. By the early 1970s, there were approximately 7.9 million students enrolled in institutions of higher learning (Thelin, 2011).

Thelin (2011) stated that between 1940 and 1950 curricular changes occurred due to joint planning between government and education toward development of a peacetime society. The federal government, bolstered by the contributions of research-based advances supporting the war movement, found reasons to encourage returning soldiers to attend college (Thelin, 2011).

Beginning as early as 1943, the government initiated discussions to begin the planning needed for the industrial adjustments required to help move the country from a wartime level and type of production to a peacetime economy, in addition to considering what the needs might be for military veterans without good employment prospects (Thelin, 2011). Political and industrial leaders recognized the need to keep returning soldiers out of the job market while factories retooled from military weaponry and munitions to cars and other civilian equipment (Thelin, 2011). Public Law 346, otherwise known as the GI Bill, was established in 1944 to guarantee military personnel

“a year of education for 90 days of service, plus one month for each month of active duty, for a maximum of 48 months. Tuition, fees, books and supplies up to \$500 per year paid directly to a college or university. Single veterans to receive subsistence allowance of \$50 per month with married veterans \$75 per month” (Thelin 2011, p. 263). The GI Bill spawned significant growth in education with institutions advertising to attract enrollees. Between 1943 and 1946, many schools doubled enrollment, admitting “talented young men” and “men of serious purpose” (Thelin, 2011, p. 264).

Thelin (2011) pointed toward Truman’s ground-breaking 1946 Commission on Higher Education as being responsible for fostering an examination of the functions of higher education, seeking ways and means to expand educational opportunities to all, and introducing curricula that included the fields of international affairs and social understanding. The Commission identified the need for intermediate technical education, as well as the need to develop additional financial structures and sources. The Commission considered the possibility that the GI Bill could be expanded to long-term programs to enhance college choice and affordability for the next generation. The Commission’s work was also the blueprint for future federal financial aid.

Higher education experienced significant growth and change in curricula as well as in the numbers and types of students beginning to attend college (Cook, 1999; Gordon 2006; White & Lindhorst, 2011). During the late 1940s and 1950s, academic advising was specialized further in some institutions by moving general advisement services from departmentally-based faculty advisors to a more centralized model of advising. A review of this historical data reveals that, while this model was not universally adopted, it did

represent a prevalent and important approach to the provision of academic advisement. Cook (2009) cited a 1948 study investigating the reasons why students leave college.

A study sponsored by the Educational Research Fund of the Tuition Plan surveyed 276 American colleges to investigate factors affecting students leaving college. On the basis of the results, the researcher set forth certain principles. Lack of guidance and planning with regard to a student's academic work drew sharp attention. This is one of the earliest studies in which the term "academic advising" was used. (p. 21)

Survey results revealed that lack of guidance and planning for students' academic work was a problem area. By the late 1950s, academic advising was perceived to be a pervasive problem on college campuses and a second report, this one by the North Central Quarterly (1958), sought to understand and state the issues. Shortly thereafter, centralized advising centers began to evolve as a delivery system designed to support and enhance faculty advising (Cook, 1999; White & Lindhorst, 2011). In addition, the term "advising" was differentiated from "counseling," in both practice and philosophy, to indicate a helping-based academic process rather than a more extensive therapeutic relationship (Gordon, 2006). However, a review of the historical literature indicated that faculty still provided the greatest percentage of advising, primarily working within the parameters of degree programs for course choice and scheduling.

The newer, centralized academic advising centers trained "professional" academic advisors to filter larger numbers of students through the general education requirements common to most degree programs (Cook, 2009). Because staff members were not required to divide their attention between teaching responsibilities and advising tasks,

professional advisors were able to gain the broad, global understanding necessary to guide students through a maze of new and changing degree programs, and increasingly complex academic regulations, more effectively. Professional advisors were able to concentrate more fully on each student's individual needs, providing guidance toward academic success based in each student's own intellectual, personal, and social make-up (Cook, 2009).

Significant changes in higher education occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, with the development of open enrollment community college systems, the introduction of more comprehensive federal financial aid programs, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which legislatively eliminated education-based racial segregation, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which extended civil rights to individuals with disabilities and provided provisions for participation in education. For the first time, students from lower socioeconomic strata, with less academic preparation, with disabilities, or of a non-traditional age, were all potentially able to pursue higher education (White & Lindhorst, 2011). In the 1950s, two-year colleges enrolled approximately 170,000 students. By 1970, over two million students were enrolled in two-year colleges (Thelin, 2011). Four-year institutions experienced the first large waves of transfer students and of international students seeking opportunities in the United States (White & Lindhorst, 2011). The literature shows that each change helped to lay the foundation for growth and development in how academic advising services must be offered to meet evolving student needs.

All categories of student service experienced growth and specialization in response to students' need for support. Within academic advising, formal academic planning processes were added to prescriptive course selection and regulatory navigation

(White & Lindhorst, 2011). The structure, function, and scope of academic advising were examined, and professional advisors began to respond to student development needs with what is now called “developmental advising” (Cook, 1999 & 2009).

Crookston (1972) was the first to use the term *developmental advising*.

Crookston posited that advising is a relationship in which the advisor and advisee agree to share the responsibility for the advising process. He believed that advising was a systematic process that required each student to set and achieve academic, personal, and career goals with the support of the academic advisor and institutional resources.

Creamer and Creamer (1994) described developmental advising as using interactive teaching, counseling, and administrative strategies in order to assist students in achieving learning, developmental, career, and life goals. Lowenstein (2005) contributed the idea that when a student makes a choice within the academic curriculum, an advisor has an opportunity to teach the student about the academic curriculum and its application to the world of work. The advisor must guide students toward achieving their own goals.

Crookston’s developmental advising model used a learning-centered, developmentally-based service plan. Its goal was to integrate the self-discovery and exploration required to combine academic, career, and life planning together toward academic success.

Crookston’s developmental advising model engendered the accepted standards of academic advising in use today (Gordon, 2006)

At about the same time as Crookston’s developmental advising process evolved, another researcher conceptualized a similar structure of advising service. O’Banion (1972) conceptualized academic advising by using five dimensions to describe the process. These are exploration of life goals, exploration of vocational goals, program

choice, course choice, and scheduling courses. He believed that academic success was inextricably linked to life goals and emphasized that life and vocational goals must be determined before students could effectively choose an academic major or individual courses. O'Banion (1994) revised his model to support the idea that, rather than moving forward through the process step by step, students more likely moved back and forth among the steps while evaluating and re-evaluating decisions, goals, and success in the classroom throughout the duration of academic participation. O'Banion's model of academic advising parallels portions of Super's life-span approach to career development. Super (1980) identified that people play a variety of roles throughout life, and that most people play several roles at once. Super indicated that the concurrent nature of life roles is, ultimately, a person's lifestyle. As a person moves between life roles, adjustment might be needed within the educational or occupational career path as decisions and goals are evaluated and re-evaluated within life needs. At any point, a vocational or educational goal can change as life goals change.

Within the field of higher education, 1970 to 1980 is considered to be a decade of identifying and managing problems (Thelin, 2011). During this time, there was limited systematic information about higher education and little thoughtful analysis of the data that was available. Many institutions experienced a lack of fiscal fitness and had grown into cumbersome, bureaucratic administrative structures that had difficulty responding to changing situations and incorporating new technologies (Thelin, 2011). There was a proliferation of new degree programs intended to address continuing enrollment growth that assumed the existing pattern of generous funding from donors and governmental resources would continue (Thelin, 2011). Thelin (2011) indicated that enrollment levels

began to diminish due to declining birthrates and the end of the military drafts, and, to combat these changes, many institutions began to lose their distinctive characters in an effort to compete with rival schools for fewer students. In an attempt to collect comprehensive statistical data about higher education, the National Center for Educational Statistics created the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) in order to produce the operational definitions used to distinguish different types of schools from each other and to collect standardized data about colleges and universities on an annual basis (Thelin, 2011). The new research generated by HEGIS fostered two additional key developments in the field of academic advising.

In 1972, academic advising was connected to new research about student retention, positioning the field as a part of the combination of campus services, structures, and functions that connect students to an institution in such a way that they are able to progress toward graduation successfully (Cook, 2009). Then, the first national academic advising conference was held in 1977, followed quickly in 1979 by the formation of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA). NACADA provided professional development and support to advisors at the national level and established ethical standards for those in the field (Cook, 2009).

Linking the academic advising process directly to student retention and forming a structure for managing formal professional development and ethical standards irrevocably affixed the field's position within the structure of higher education. By 1981, the term "academic advising" was added as a descriptor in the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), a clearinghouse for educational articles, and NACADA published the first refereed journal dedicated to the field of academic advising (White &

Lindhorst, 2011). NACADA also established the first national recognition of academic advisors and advising programs (Cook, 2009).

Throughout the 1980s, other student services and higher education-based national organizations began including the field of academic advising among a growing cadre of discrete student services, culminating in the development of mission, administrative, resources, facilities, and ethical standards for inclusion in the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) publication in 1986 (Cook, 2009). As the 1980s gave way to the 1990s, the field of academic advising began to offer specialization for those serving targeted populations, such as athletes, undeclared students, and individuals with disabilities (Cook, 1999; Gordon, 2006).

### **Academic Advising in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Beyond**

Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as higher education enrollments continued to grow and both students and curricula continued to diversify, financial support for higher education faltered. Moreover, as resources and support declined, expectations for accountability increased (Cook, 2009). Many institutions continued to provide a full range of services and did so while increasing enrollment and maintaining or decreasing staff. These issues threatened many institutions' ability to meet the appropriate standards and ethical guidelines necessary for appropriate and supportive advising services. In many cases, over-taxed advising structures were forced to shift away from developmental advising efforts back toward more prescriptive advising processes (Cook, 2009; Gordon, 2006). The push and pull of financial support deficiencies, and student support and developmental needs, continues to force many advisors to maintain what is sometimes a very frustrating balancing act.

Practitioners are seeking new models of service that continue to address student development, but that also assist the field of academic advising to advance forward toward new models of service (Gordon, 2006). Career advising is a model of academic advising that addresses the developmental and learning-centered nature of academic advising in a different way.

Butler (1995) suggested that academic advisors and career counselors use many of the same skills and focus on many of the same student concerns. However, Butler defined the scope of advising to include helping students learn the information-seeking, analytical, and decision-making skills required to successfully meet institutional expectations and academic achievement, rather than the broader career counseling mission of general self-reflection and restructuring of beliefs that result in understanding self and the potential for a chosen lifestyle. Career counseling, on the other hand, is a process by which students learn how to identify skills, make decisions about potential career paths, and ultimately complete their education in such a way that they are able to meet career goals, often conducted therapeutically and involving the resolution of career development problems (Gordon, 2006). Both career counseling techniques and academic advising techniques include skill development, information gathering, and self-exploration. It seems reasonable that over-taxed institutions might find that employing individuals able to perform both processes would be of benefit. Further, because academic advising is a required process at most institutions, students might benefit from having elements of career development included at the beginning of their academic experience. Conversely, career counseling is rarely a required process on a college

campus and, for many, comes too late in the collegiate experience to establish foundational career decision-making processes (Cook, 2009).

By definition, Career Advising is a “less psychologically intensive approach to career counseling” (Gordon, 2006, p. 11). It emphasizes information gathering and helping students understand the connections between educational choice and general career fields. Career advisors are able to help students consider how personal interests, abilities, and values predict academic success toward various career fields they may consider and help students form academic and career goals appropriately (Gordon, 2006).

**Career advising as a model of academic advising.** Gordon (2006) defined the core principals of career advising. She posited that career choice and maintenance is a lifelong process in which college is a single point within what will be a series of choices and transitions. As such, integrating self-knowledge, educational knowledge, and an understanding of the career path options helps connect student understanding of realistic academic and career alternatives. Further, she asserts that both academic and career decisions are value based and thus require an understanding of one’s own belief system, and that the decision-making skills developed will be used throughout a student’s lifetime.

As higher education continues to grow and change, so must the field of academic advising. New academic disciplines continue to emerge, the working world is diverse and increasingly complex, and college students perceive that higher education is essentially a preparational foundation for future life goals (Hughey, Nelson, Damming, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009). Regardless of which service a student pursues, academic advising cannot occur appropriately without discussing elements of career development

and vice versa. If these are so closely linked, why not integrate each into a combined powerhouse of service (Hughey, Nelson, Damminger, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009)?

**Career advising's potential contribution to student retention.** In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, institutions developed strategies to address the problems of student retention, progression, and timely graduation. When an institution is able to adequately address the needs of students, students are more likely to stay at the institution. Because every institution is unique in size, structure, student demographics, location, services, and degree programs, every institution must find retention strategies that work for its own unique situation.

Authors, over time, have attempted to understand and explain the reasons that students leave higher education. In his discussion of several of the initial theories of departure, Tinto (2012) indicated that departure theories were formed to try to address the issue of retention and attempt to identify some of the reasons that students drop out. These were essentially theories built on the idea that a student's personality attributes were the primary influence on academic success. Tinto (2012) revisited these theories, noting that they all seemed to "blame" the student. They indicated that a student's maturity level, propensity to rebel against authority, lack of seriousness about school, unreasonable expectations of success, lack of value placed on class attendance, or other such shortcomings or personal failures caused students to leave college. However, Tinto (2102) pointed out that these early theories of departure were not effective in explaining departure in enough detail or scope to help those charged with finding ways to retain students on campus. He also asserted that research does not support the idea of a

“departure-prone” personality, and in using the earlier theories, practitioners ignored the idea that individual behavior depends on the environment.

Tinto (2012) described, as well, newer theories of departure that attempted to rectify the blaming structure inherent in the earlier theories of departure. For example, environmental theories of departure tried to incorporate the wider social, economic, and organizational forces that impact student behavior in higher education, while social/organizational theories of departure considered the organization and structure of the school itself. Presently, the current thinking about departure not only seeks to describe departure, but also to explain it. Tinto (2012) stated that both individual and institutional attributes can be associated with attrition, and that intellectual (academic) and social integration can modify a student’s intentions, greatly affecting persistence. Students who are not able to establish membership within academic and social communities are less likely to be successful. Tinto uses the words “bipolar” to describe this combination of academic structure and social culture (p. 121). Students might or might not participate fully in both academic and social structures. Depending on which academic or social structures in which they chose to participate, students might or might not need to adopt the values and norms inherent in such participation. Further, rather than adopting the values or norms of the dominant academic or social culture, students might choose to participate in multiple sub-communities within the overall institution. For example, a student who joins a fraternity may actively participate in that community’s sub-culture, adhering to the values and norms of that social group, regardless of the institution’s recognition of the group. The same student may limit social interactions to those in the fraternity and a sister organization, behaving in a

manner that is acceptable within the group, choosing a major that the group supports, or even studying or not studying at adequate levels, even if those interactions or behaviors aren't readily acceptable to the institution itself. The current theory recognizes that persistence can be significantly affected by events or factors elsewhere in a student's life and may not be related in any way to what the institution is or is not doing (Tinto, 2012). The current theory does not unduly blame a student or the institution, but instead recognizes that practitioners need to understand both students and the institution itself to better address retention issues.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), exploring how participation in higher education affects students, indicated that early socialization of students appears to assist in retention. Research into summer "bridge" programs promoting acclimation to college life, developmental study programs that connect a teacher with a small group of students, and membership in one or more groups on campus, suggests that all appear as positive support for the idea that participation equals persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The research of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) also indicates that schools using enhanced academic advising and counseling measures, such as pre and post admissions advising, 'intrusive' advising, group advising, and special population advising, are helping students' early institutional connectivity, and it consistently finds that academic advising plays a role in student persistence. Cuseo (n.d.), Drake (2011), Harper and Quaye (2007), Hughey, Burton Nelson, Damminger, and McCalla-Wriggins (2009), and Alberts (2004) made arguments in support of both Tinto and Pascarella and Terenzini, in addition to further identifying the ways in which academic advising plays a significant role in retention.

Drake (2011) noted the “power of out-of-class interaction” and the “vital link” that academic advising plays in the persistence equation. Drake also stated that students come to college for many reasons but that it is what happens when they are there that matters most. Cuseo (n.d.) built a case for the value of academic advising by discussing its support for overall student satisfaction and the influence it has on a student’s quality of educational experience by helping students learn to make effective educational and career decisions; encouraging utilization of, and connection to, institutional support services; and providing needed faculty/staff interaction outside of the classroom. Cuseo (n.d.) did caution, though, that the quality of advising is important and that students must actively participate in the process in order to reap the greatest benefit. Drake (2011) and Cuseo (n.d.) both echoed the idea that students often arrive at an institution without a clear idea of what they want to do or why they want to do it, so strong, interactive academic advising programs are necessary to the success of students.

The research of Harper and Quaye (2007) and of Hughey, Burton Nelson, Damminger, and McCalla-Wriggins (2009) supports the importance of student participation in the advising process, defining the terms of student engagement as a dual responsibility. Students must play a part in engagement, but educators must foster the conditions that enable students to engage. The use of academic advising helps to support student engagement, and the use of a developmental model of academic advising has shown to further foster the conditions that enable students to engage. Career advising literature strongly suggests that a developmental career advising process in which academic advising and basic elements of career development are combined is also likely to push student engagement levels even further. In the 2004 ACT Survey Report, “What

Works in Student Retention” (2004), several strategies were noted as being the most effective for retention. Of the respondents, 72.1% indicated that one of the most effective strategies used since 1980 was improvement or redevelopment of the institution’s academic advising program. When identifying practices responsible for the greatest contribution to retention, respondents indicated several advising related practices were some of the most effective; these included academic advising interventions with selected student populations, increasing the size of advising staffs, integrating advising in first year transition programs, improving academic advising centers, and combining academic advising with career and life planning (p. 5). Survey results further indicated that schools with high retention and graduation rates were more likely to offer intentional retention strategies as a part of their academic advising strategies. Core recommendations from the survey identified academic advising as an important retention intervention and suggested that institutions should consider expanding academic advising to include career and life planning and intentionally incorporating the expanded advising strategies for special populations (e.g., under-prepared students, first generation students, athletes, non-traditional students, students on probation).

Moreover, research shows that issues of career development are of utmost importance to students. Over the course of 40 years, research conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has shown that students consistently and increasingly report that one of the primary reasons they attend college is “to get a better job” (p. 21). One significant change between the initial research and the 40 year research was in how important students felt attending college was for increasing earning power. The 1976 data identified this reason was important in 49.9 percent of students. In the

2006 data, 69 percent of students identified this reason. Given these trends, it is even more imperative that institutions find ways to address career development related needs in students (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos, & Korn, 2008).

Regardless of the potential for positive outcomes associated with reconfiguring a standard advising model to that of a career advising model, decision-makers must consider how structural changes should be made. Bolman and Deal (1991) developed four perspectives for understanding leadership and management effectiveness. These perspectives, called frames, help practitioners better understand organizations and leadership. The four frames include: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Within the structural frame, decision-makers may view change through their own personal set of filters without questioning how the organization might work better. It is, therefore, significantly important that leadership define goals, divide staff into specific roles, and develop a set of policies and procedures that help set a clear direction (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

According to NACADA's resource clearinghouse (2014), there are currently 34 institutions in the United States using career advising as their model of centralized advising. Although the model makes sense within the scope and function of academic advising, and published materials provide support for why the model should be beneficial to students, there is currently very little actual research about career advising models currently in use in higher education. As such, conducting a formal research study will contribute significantly to the field by providing additional insight into such programs

and their development, and by beginning to address the lack of applied research related to career advising within the field.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the career advising program at a single institution in order to learn about the decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a more traditional model of advising to career advising. The ultimate goal of the study was to discover and examine why and how such decisions were made, how the change process occurred, and how such a change affected the structure and function of the advising office. In doing so, other institutions considering use of a career advising model of academic advising in support of student retention and progression would be able to learn from the experiences of another institution.

#### **Qualitative Inquiry**

Research can be conducted in many ways, but qualitative inquiry is particularly appropriate when the primary goal of the research is to understand the complex contexts or settings in which a situation occurs and in which the voices of those involved in the process need to be heard to fully understand the situation being studied (Creswell, 2009). In many cases, a researcher might choose qualitative inquiry when quantitative measures do not adequately capture the uniqueness of the individuals or setting involved in the study (Creswell, 2009).

**Rationale for case study.** Although several modes of inquiry can be applied to qualitative research, case study methodology was an appropriate approach for this

investigation. A case study is a “strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Merriam (1998) described a case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon” (p.27). Yin (2009) indicated that a case study should be an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p.18) and in which there will be many variables of interest that must be triangulated.

Stake (1995) described three methodologies within the realm of case study research: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and collective case study (p. 3). The differences between the three case study methodologies are defined by the cases themselves. In an intrinsic case study, the researcher must design the study around a specific object. Stake (1995) described a situation in which a case essentially chooses the researcher. For example, perhaps the researcher is a teacher who recognizes that a student is having an issue. Because the teacher has an invested interest in the well-being of the student, the teacher-as-researcher must learn about the problem in order to be of assistance to the student. When the researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case, the type of case is identified as an intrinsic case study. In an instrumental case study, the researcher has a research question and a need for an understanding that, while not generalizable to other qualitative cases, may provide a farther reaching insight by looking at a single case. Continuing to use the example above, provided by Stake (1995), the study would become an instrumental case when a research question is applied and the student’s situation is used to illuminate a greater phenomenon. While the student remains the case, the researcher isn’t seeking to assist the student in solving a specific issue. A

collective case study, the third type, multiplies the object of the case. Using the initial example provided above, the case itself would require the inclusion of several students, or perhaps individual students in several different schools, to assist the researcher in better understanding the phenomenon (Stake, 1995).

This study was an instrumental case study focusing on a single bounded case to illustrate the context being studied. Instrumental case study is most often used when the researcher may gain both general understanding and specific insight into a situation by studying a particular case and, for this study, an instrumental case study was the methodology most likely to provide the requisite understanding and insight sought (Stake, 1995).

**Rationale for single-case study.** In determining what type of case study to use, a researcher must also consider if a single bounded case type of case study (single-case study), or if a multiple case type of case study (multiple-case study) is the better choice. A single bounded case is most appropriate when the researcher is studying either a unique case, an extreme case, a critical case, or a representative, typical case (Yin, 2009). Merriam (1998) further indicates that case study methodology cannot be defined as only its end product. “The single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of the study, the case ...the case is a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27). For the purposes of this research, it was determined that the case examined was a case that not only accurately represented how a career advising model of academic advising was intended to operate, but also a case that exemplified best practices within the fields of both academic advising and career development, for a college that might desire to effect institution-wide change. Using this

specific program as a single-case study could provide a school considering creating their own career advising program with a benchmark against which they could measure their own plans and eventual program.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), there were 4,599 degree granting colleges and universities in the United States in 2011. Of these, approximately 34 institutions, less than one percent, have reported using the career advising model of academic advising. Of schools using the model, several use it only within a small institutional unit, several use it only partially within combined services offices, while others declined the opportunity to participate in the study (see detail below under Research Design). As such, the challenge for this researcher was to find a school that was willing to participate in the study and, at the same time, could accurately represent the career advising model of academic advising for the few schools that currently use it. The participating college was both a representative model of career advising, but also a model that included several unique qualities that had the potential of enriching the discussion for institutions considering use of the model. When the single case best illustrates the context being studied, provides insight into unique qualities at the site that other institutions might want to consider, and can act as an accurate representation when there are limited research options, a single-case design is the best approach.

The researcher used a single-case study to explore a variety of issues surrounding how a single institution went about combining elements of career development within its academic advising model. The single case design provided an opportunity to study an institution that is using the model as defined in the literature in order to give insight into the process but that also had unique qualities.

As described by Stake (1995), cases are “bounded by time and activity” (p.2). This case study has several boundaries, including the institution, the staff within the Academic Advising Center, and the academic advising “career advising” model in use. The relationships and interactions between these contexts will be revealed in order to facilitate an understanding of the case being studied. Although the paradigms used by qualitative researchers vary depending on the beliefs they bring to the research, case study methodology is used as a means to simply report on the case itself, without significant interpretation or filtering of the information presented (Yin, 2009).

### **Research Design**

The nature of this study was based in qualitative research so that the researcher could examine career advising in its natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, the elements being studied in terms of the meanings that staff at this institution bring to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The design of this study was single-case research for several reasons. From a practical perspective, research sites are limited when only 34 institutions report using the model. That number decreases when several of the participating institutions only use the model within a small unit. Several schools invited to participate chose not to do so, citing that their programs did not fully use the model as defined, indicating lack of staff time available, or simply failing to respond to communication regarding participation in the study. The challenge was to find a school that wanted to participate, that exemplified use of the model as described in the literature, and that had enough long-term staff to provide the “institutional memory” needed to explain the decision-making process and transition to the career advising model of academic advising. The site chosen met these qualifications while also providing some

unique qualities that might provide insight into, or otherwise help to illustrate, the process used in a way that might be helpful for other institutions considering this model of academic advising. Further, this study was intended to focus on the decision-making and implementation processes used to move an institution from a different model of advising to the career advising model, with the goal of informing others about what the transition processes looked like as a way to potentially inform their own processes. This single-case allowed an in-depth understanding of one school's transition process, a process that could provide insight for other schools considering implementing use of the career advising model of academic advising.

Because there are very few schools using the model, and because there is virtually no published research that describes this transition process, this study can be considered a preliminary study. What was learned at this site could be used to inform wider study of the topic in the future.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection occurred during a 3-day visit to the campus during summer 2014. All data gathered from participant resources was collected with permission from, and protection for, participants, as well as in compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines of UGA and the institution being studied.

Data were collected in several ways during a 3-day visit to the campus. The researcher requested an opportunity to meet with upper administration and office leadership who were a part of the decision-making process, as well as key faculty or staff who worked at the institution both before and after the model change, or those who worked within alternative models of advising. Initially, the plan was to conduct both

individual and group interviews, using a set of “semi-structured” interview questions, depending on staff availability and time constraints (see detailed list of participants included in Ch. 4). “Semi-structured” interview questions, as described by Merriam (1998), are designed to be open-ended, allowing respondents to define their experiences in whatever way they choose. For the purposes of this research, each session incorporated an initial set of questions employed as conversation starters. Additional questions were incorporated, depending on the need to further draw out conversation or guide the conversation toward additional information that further illuminated the study.

Although similar to focus group design, group interviewing is a distinct process devised as a means to collect information. The purpose of group interviewing is to use the group dynamic to stimulate thoughts and ideas that might not emerge during individual discussion. In addition, group interviewing allows the moderator to play a more interactive role in questioning and guiding the discussion (Frey & Fontana, 1991). However, in the end, time constraints for participants were better served by individually interviewing all participants.

In order to look for complexity of views among participants, the researcher used a set of initial questions, developed using the literature, supporting the central research questions, and designed to foster discussion and enhance participants’ ability to self-construct meaning (Appendix A). Because an exhaustive search of career advising literature revealed no applied research, initial and supporting questions were designed to help participants respond so that the researcher could address gaps in the literature. As interviewing sessions progressed, the researcher was able to add or eliminate follow-up questions based on the information already provided by participants. Although

questioning may reveal some measure of emotional reaction to the context being studied, the primary questioning structure was designed for gathering information and detailing participant perspectives. Ultimately, the researcher sought to build rapport with participants in order to enhance interviewee comfort and foster natural conversation. The ultimate goal was for participants to offer honest and reliable information within a secure, but encouraging, environment. The researcher interviewed seven people. In each case, a specific 60-90 minute time frame was identified for each participant. Meetings were held in individual offices, providing a comfortable and secure environment during the interview. The consent to participate form was provided in advance to each participant. Further, at the start of each interview, the researcher reviewed the consent form as well. The researcher then sought to put the participant at ease by asking introductory questions about each person's tenure at the institution, basic educational training, and experience with academic advising. The researcher used body language cues and verbal continuity to determine the comfort level of participants and, as the meeting became more conversational in nature, the researcher introduced some of the semi-structured questions included in Appendix A. Questions introduced were influenced by the staff member's position as well as by when the individual became a member of the CASTLE. The researcher also used field notes and a researcher journal to record impressions and observations of each interview both immediately after the interview and after a period of reflection.

During each session, the researcher not only audio-taped the interview, but also created a set of field notes. After each interview, the researcher took a few moments to review the field notes as a way to reinforce initial impressions and observations prior to

the next interview. Because a Livescribe SmartPen was used as both the recording device and note-taking device, specific sections of audio-tapes could be reviewed quickly before proceeding to the next meeting. This ensured that information could be easily and quickly reviewed, identifying what was similar to that provided in other interviews as well as identifying the information that was different. This process helped the researcher more effectively guide questioning session by session. Transcription of the interviews began at the end of the first day of sessions, and continued for several days after interviews were completed, as did ongoing personal reflection and interpretation using a researcher journal.

### **Data Analysis**

Case study methodology most often generates a large amount of data due to using both individual and group interviewing processes, as well as reviewing documents, so it is important to organize the data as it is gathered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998). It is also important to conduct a preliminary analysis immediately after initial collection to ensure that data will be continuously interpreted. The intention, during continuous interpretation, is to use recorded interviews to look for commonalities and outliers, and then to use these to help guide sessions toward the most salient data. Salience can be determined in several ways. Sometimes salience can be judged by frequency. When more than one participant includes specific information, or if specific information appears several times within a single interview, it could be judged as the most salient data. Salience can also be determined by considering information that is not in common among interviews. For example, although several participants may mention changes in staff, only a person in a leadership role is likely to talk about personnel issues

from a supervisory perspective. The person in a leadership role may offer a unique viewpoint related to changes in staff and is likely to be able to more clearly identify the factors. Sometimes who provided specific information, their position within the organization, the length of time they have been at the institution, or their unique viewpoint is as important as how many times specific information has been provided. It is even possible to judge information provided infrequently as important when considering how that information was offered. The specific vocabulary used, the vocal tone, or the body language of the participant can all help determine salience.

Unlike other qualitative methodologies, case study design is not intended to provide themes among the information gathered (Yin, 2009). However, it is important that data is reviewed frequently to check information between members to ensure that salient data is identified. Moreover, it is important to review the data frequently, and as it is gathered, so that the interviewer can help guide the successive sessions appropriately using the semi-structured questioning technique. Continuous interpretation can help the researcher make the interview process as focused, in-depth, and useful as possible. Stake (1994) emphasized that data is reflective and, as such, a researcher must reflect on the impressions, recollections, and records gained. Each point of analysis may also help to winnow useful data from extraneous information and serve to guide the investigation as it progresses.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

While qualitative methods are not generalizable from study to study, it is possible to enhance the validity and reliability to such a degree that a study may be comparable or translatable to another similar case (Cresswell, 2007). In order to ensure the greatest

amount of trustworthiness and credibility possible, the interview data was triangulated among participant interviews and researcher observations with field notes, through reflections and comparisons occurring during the journaling process, and by returning to participants during transcription and analysis to confirm the information through member checking. Interviewing and observation are customary within a case study research model (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998), and both offer the researcher the opportunity to gain an insider's perspective of the case being studied. In this study, commonalities in the data were identified using analysis of word-for-word transcription of interviewee responses, as well as observations of body language included in the field notes by the researcher during interviewing, via discussion of the evolution of current position descriptions for staff within the office, through document analysis of printed brochures available in the office for informational purposes as well as to aid in understanding institutional branding. During the course of the study, the researcher used journaling as a way to track the structure and process of the study and the researcher's feelings, biases, or other such pertinent information that shaped the outcome of the study. Journaling enables researchers to "become more self-aware, as they monitor and attempt to control their biases" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 275).

Themes, within case study methodology, follow the nature of reporting. As such, "themes" in this context simply reflected informational streams that occurred most often within transcripts, rather than using an intercoding process as occurs in other qualitative methodologies to identify and combine the essence of meaning participants may assign to what is learned (Yin, 2009).

## **Context of Research Site and Participants**

According to the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) website (2014), 34 institutions in the United States have reported using a career advising model of academic advising. A review of school websites provided further information about each program, showing that seven used the model in a small unit providing academic advising for a limited population. Of the remaining schools, six appeared to have begun use of the model between 2003 and 2006, while the rest appeared to have begun use of the model after 2006. The institution included in this study began using the model early in the second wave and is an ideal site for a number of reasons. In addition to providing a view of a mature program, the site used was geographically accessible and offered the researcher an opportunity to physically visit and work with the staff in person.

This case study concentrated on an academic advising center at an institution located in the central U.S. The institution was a private college that included more than 50 undergraduate degree programs serving more than 1,700 students from diverse backgrounds. The institution had a well-developed experiential learning and community engagement program and was ranked as a 1<sup>st</sup> Tier Best National Liberal Arts College by U.S. News and World Report (2015). Academic advising occurred within a centralized advising center as well as across the academy, a structural choice that provided a practical distribution of workload while, at the same time, allowing each category of advisor the opportunity to use specialized areas of knowledge. Centralized advising offered academic advisors the opportunity to specialize in non-major-related general education core requirements and academic major selection, while faculty advisors specialized in departmental knowledge and curriculum. The centralized advising center

included 6 professional staff members, including a director, an assistant director, and four associates, in addition to one administrative assistant and approximately 15 peer mentors. Of these, the director was instrumental in the paradigm shift toward career advising, and the assistant director and three associates have worked in the model for two or more years and were able to provide a variety of perspectives about the phenomenon. Two additional staff members from the campus community were included in the research. The administrator responsible for Enrollment Management was also instrumental in the paradigm shift toward career advising, and a veteran faculty advisor was included as someone who worked closely with office staff and who was able to offer a perspective from both before and after the paradigm shift. The single associate who was not included in the research had been employed in the office for less than two weeks at the time of the campus visit. Although the administrative assistant and peer mentors provided support for office staff, their level of knowledge about the career advising model of academic advising was limited so it was unlikely that their contribution to the research would be meaningful.

Most research requires a plan for identifying the population to be studied, determining an appropriate method of sampling, and recruiting participants that reflect the overall content and structure of the group being studied. However, due to the small number of people involved in the phenomenon being studied, this case study included all members of the advising staff and administrative leadership who were instrumental in the paradigm shift toward career advising, as well as others who had worked within other models of academic advising at other institutions. As such, data gathered should truly reflect the full range of meanings constructed by participants. Although the specific

purpose of the research was to learn about the decision-making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a traditional model of advising to career advising, additional insight into the career advising model of academic advising was gained from interviewing additional staff.

### **Delimitations**

The institution had used career advising for a number of years, which meant that the model was well-established within the institution. However, because the model has been in use for a number of years, it is also possible that participants' memories of the decision-making and implementation were less clear. Time often brings a changed perspective in which the results of this type of change help those involved in the change to see the process differently, and there was a possibility that former reservations had given way because of positive results experienced by use of the career advising model, or vice versa.

### **Conclusion**

Using case study design, this research sought the perspectives of those who were involved in the paradigm shift from a traditional model of academic advising to the career advising model of academic advising, as well as those of individuals who could provide useful observations about this model of academic advising. Although this type of qualitative research is not generalizable to other institutions, this college was both a representative model of career advising and a model that included several unique qualities, all of which could help to enrich the discussion for schools that might consider use of this model of academic advising.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Academic advising and career development have both been shown to be of significant importance to student retention and progression over the course of an academic degree program (Cuseo, n.d.; Drake, 2011; Hughey, Burton Nelson, Damminger, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009; Tinto, 2000). Research also indicates that career preparation is of significant importance to today's student (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard, & Hurtado, 2014). It seems clear that the impact of combining academic advising and career development could therefore be even more significant than offering each one separately. Career advising is a specific model of academic advising that combines advising and career counseling processes to emphasize the relationship between educational choice and general career field, including how personal interests, abilities, and values relate to academic and career paths, and how to form appropriate academic and career goals based on this information (Gordon, 2006).

However, despite these findings, no evidence-based research has been published regarding the career advising model of academic advising. The purpose of this case study was to explore the career advising program at a single institution in order to learn about the decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a more traditional model of advising to career advising.

To gain insight into this institution's career advising model of academic advising, the researcher conducted interviews, reviewed office brochures and hand-outs, and

observed basic operations of the student support unit tasked with providing centralized academic advising services. Staff both inside and outside the unit were interviewed, providing multiple perspectives about the career advising model of academic advising.

### **Participants**

Seven participants from the institution were interviewed. Participants were invited to engage in the research based on their relationship to the office and understanding of the career advising process in use. To preserve the confidentiality of the participants, each was assigned a pseudonym for the study. Participants included the five primary staff members of the unit, in addition to two external staff members. The two external staff members, one of whom was a faculty member and one of whom was a senior administrator, were invited to participate in order to gain their perspectives on the model and its use. Of the seven participants, three had been at the institution for more than 20 years and were able to speak about earlier advising paradigms used at the institution. Because all those participating in the study work together on a daily basis on a small college campus, the researcher has tried to provide as much anonymity as possible while still ensuring that the data gathered is as reliable and valid as possible. A general description of participants is as follows; position titles have been adjusted to reflect the nature of work performed rather than the exact titles currently in use at the institution, and pseudonyms were used when describing their individual contributions to the research:

- Administrator with responsibility for enrollment management (Nora)
- Unit director with both administrative and academic advising responsibilities (Val)

- Associate director of the unit, with both career services and academic advising responsibilities (David)
- Unit staff member with academic advising and writing/reading/speaking lab responsibilities (Jayne)
- Unit staff member with academic advising and disabilities services responsibilities (Kara)
- Unit staff member with academic advising, vocation and mentoring, and supplemental instruction responsibilities (Tate)
- Faculty member with responsibility for advising a large group of Biology and pre-professional majors (Nancy)

All participants were easy to engage, open to the interview process, and readily willing to volunteer personal perspectives. Demographically, participants included five women and two men, four of whom were educated at the master's degree level and three at the doctoral level. All were Caucasian. Participants ranged in age from late 20s to mid-60s and had between five and 35 years of work experience. The participant with the least amount of experience on campus had been there for two full years.

### **Data Review**

Typically, qualitative inquiry is used when the primary goal of the research is to understand complex contexts or settings in which a situation occurs, and to allow the perspectives of those involved in the setting to be heard (Creswell, 2009). Case study methodology, in particular, is appropriate for this study because case study allows the researcher to explore a program in depth (Creswell 2009) by allowing an investigation of a phenomenon within a real-life context (Merriam, 1998), and by allowing an analysis of

many variables (Yin, 2009). Although many qualitative research designs identify themes within the data, case study primarily reports the relationships and interactions between the many variables identified through the research process. Although themes are not identified, and neither interpretation nor filtering of the data will occur, commonalities and discrepancies discovered through the interviewing sessions will be noted. As such, relationships and interactions between the variables will be revealed (Yin, 2009).

**Key commonalities.** After careful review of field notes containing both verbal and non-verbal impressions, transcription of interviews, and analysis of reflections and comparisons contained in the researcher journal, two key commonalities have been discovered from among the perspectives provided. First, and foremost, all parties agreed that the career advising model of academic advising served the needs of their students effectively. In addition, all parties agreed that this model of service met the goals of the institutional mission and strategic plan. Although each staff member interviewed provided their own perspective and unique observations, similar vocabulary and descriptions were often used. Nora indicated that the university administration in general, and the office staff in particular, have made intentional choices about how specific services will be described; this was reflected in the interviews. Common language supported the institutional brand, while also helping students better understand services and relationships between various campus offices when seeking assistance.

**Branding.** According to Waeraas and Solbakk (2008), the concept of “branding” comes from the business world but is used more and more frequently in higher education. The word branding is used to describe the process of creating a higher education identity and reputation. An institution’s brand is the link between what a school “stands for” and

how it is perceived in the marketplace; it reflects the values and characteristics that contribute to the unique essence of each institution. Waeraas and Solbakk (2008) asserted that everyone at an institution must “live the brand” (p. 451). The institution must collectively decide not only “who we are and what we stand for” (p. 450) as an institution, but also “who we want to be and what we would like to stand for” in the future (p. 450). Once defined, each element of the institution must find a way to connect to the institutional mission and strategic plan so that every part supports the whole and conveys the same message to students and the public at large. The common language and messaging used during interviews reflected the office’s success at supporting the institutional brand, as well as provided clarity as to why career advising was the model of academic advising chosen for use at the college.

#### RESULTS OF THE STUDY AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the career advising program at a single institution in order to learn about the decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a traditional model of academic advising to the career advising model of academic advising, using five central research questions. Subsequent supporting procedural questions further illuminated how the change affected the structure and function of the advising office itself, the impact on staff, and staff impressions of the success of the model. However, to better understand the context of the study, one must first understand the institution.

## **Institutional Context**

The overview that follows is based on information obtained from the institutional website and from interviews conducted on-site. Direct quotations are taken from the website and written materials unless otherwise noted.

The college was established in the mid-1850s by missionaries as a faith-based institution, and moved to its current location in 1935. In the early 1990s, the leadership of the institution became concerned about projections related to a decline in membership within the national body of the affiliated church. As recruiting became less productive, the leadership of the institution sought input from an educational consultation service and a systematic approach to the creation of a new institutional mission and strategic plan was developed. Over the course of several years, the college made a number of changes, including developing a new institutional mission that supported an emphasis on education as well as on a spirit of service and reflected that the institution was “dedicated to challenging and nurturing students for lives of leadership and service as a spirited expression of their faith and learning.” The faculty and staff agreed, as one, that they must seek to “help students discover and claim their callings – connecting their learning with faith and values, their understanding of themselves and their gifts, their perspective on life and the future, and the opportunities for participating in church, community, and the larger society in purposeful and meaningful ways.” After defining this new mission, the institution reviewed each program and service.

The institution’s academic advising and career services offices grew and changed in much the same way as such offices have historically developed within higher education. Academic advising at the college was initially relegated to faculty and was

prescriptive in nature. As the numbers of degrees offered increased, and curricula became more complex, faculty knowledge was too limited and specialized to address the needs of students who were uncertain about their majors or who found that they were unable to successfully complete the required coursework for their major. When faculty sought support for these students, they were most often sent to the learning support center. Over time, “exploratory” academic advising became a de facto service of the learning support center.

Career services also developed in much the same way as is represented within historical higher education literature. Career services initially provided “placement” opportunities for graduating students and, over time, began to add the developmental processes that could begin to address students’ needs to understand the connections between academic major and future career options and to address the need for a more holistic life planning process. Nora, the administrator with responsibility for enrollment management, and Val, the LRC director, both provided an historical perspective of the institution before and after the change to career advising.

### **Laying the Groundwork for Career Advising**

In the early 1990s, the Learning Resource Center (LRC) was essentially the campus tutoring service. It was a one-person program tasked with assisting students to learn the necessary skills required to perform well academically and with matching students with individual tutors, subject-by-subject. Nora, to whom the LRC administrator, Val, reported, recognized that student usage numbers and staffing were more and more out of balance, that there was an issue with staff performing an “academic” function without full credibility within the academy, and that the services

provided required more than cursory collaboration with several other services on campus. Nora recognized, as well, that the LRC had begun to unofficially provide centralized academic advising services to exploratory students.

Nora and Val together gathered a taskforce of faculty and staff to discuss ideas related to ways LRC services might be integrated on campus, possible team structures, staffing needs, and other such factors that would better meet the new institutional mission and strategic plan. During this time frame, the institution was critically considering the concept of a “calling” and the idea that part of the institution’s educational role was to help students define a plan to contribute to the world in a purposeful manner using whatever their individually-defined calling might be. This period of institutional change took several years and included adjustments to existing divisions and creation of new ones, as well as review and change within degree programs, within campus services and resources, and within the scope of staff roles.

In 1996, Nora attended the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) conference and attended the conference session that first presented the concept of career advising as an advising model. “I realized that this was the type of integrated service package we were looking for, and it spoke to the idea of structured collaboration among services to meet our new strategic plan.” She indicated, as well, that it occurred to her that combining services in this way had the potential to allow limited staff to support each other’s efforts in a more cohesive way. Nora returned to campus with the NACADA conference in mind and presented the concept of career advising to the taskforce. By the time the taskforce concluded, they had developed a plan for the LRC that broadened the scope of services provided, structured collaboration among several

campus services, revised the primary administrator's job description with the academic credentials necessary to be on par with faculty, and addressed staffing needs required to better support students. Over time, the changes were implemented, including a name change that better addressed the new scope of services provided.

### **The Learning Resource Center: 1996**

In 1996, Val had already been at the institution for several years as faculty and had shifted into the leadership role in the LRC. At the time, it was a one-person office with a narrow purview: to serve students who needed academic support such as learning skill development, enhanced study skills, and subject matter tutoring. As Val worked with struggling students, she found herself answering more and more questions about what to do if they could not pass some of the courses required for their majors, what to do if they thought they might want to change major, how much longer completing a different degree might take, and so on. Val realized that, "Although faculty advisors were knowledgeable about the degree programs they served, they didn't know what to do with students who were floundering in key courses. So, they would just refer students over to the LRC in hopes we could help them pass." Val began to seek answers for students who wanted, or felt they needed, to change majors. She stated that, over time, she became a competent advisor for a number of majors on campus. However, Val also acknowledged that the process of choosing a new major would have been incomplete without having the student work through a career decision-making process.

### **The Career Center: 1996**

Like the LRC, the Career Center was a one-person office prior to 1996. The Career Center was primarily a "placement" service. Its primary function was to help

students write resumes, practice interviewing, make connections through networking, and identify sources of job openings for which students could apply when they were close to graduation. The taskforce that looked at the LRC scope of services also looked at the scope of service being provided through the Career Center. The taskforce recognized several issues. First, the Career Center wasn't particularly well-received on campus. There was confusion about what services the office did and did not provide, and a number of constituencies on campus expressed lack of faith in the director. Although the office mission included both placement services and career decision-making services, without adequate staffing, services related to underclassmen weren't consistently offered. Further, the new institutional brand included volunteerism, community service, and other experience-based programming that would most logically be provided within the Career Center package of services.

Nora and Val both reported that the institutional shift toward a new mission and strategic plan was difficult for some faculty and staff, and that held true for the director of the Career Center. Nora indicated that when she attended the 1996 NACADA conference, she did it with the knowledge that the Career Center needed to change, and that it was likely that the scope of the director's role would probably also have to change. Nora said that she was delighted when she realized that career advising could provide an avenue for integrating the formal and de facto services of the LRC with those of the Career Center. She stated, "At the time, I thought that if the director of the Career Center was less overwhelmed, he might have an easier time accepting the new mission and strategic plan. But, unfortunately, that was not to be." Nora and Val both spoke about the need to carefully choose staff. Not only do staff need to buy in to the institutional

mission and strategic plan by living the brand, but also they must be accepting of change, they must be flexible during a change process, and their personalities must mesh well with those of their colleagues. Nora first moved services provided by the Career Center to the LRC, and also moved the director into a co-directing role with Val. When that did not work well, she made the difficult decision to remove the Career Center director from the equation.

### **Creating the CASTLE**

Although the institution fully embraced its new branding within the first couple of years, it took another year to combine the LRC and Career Center, embed career advising as the advising model in use, and identify the right mix of staff. By that point the LRC had become a very different service. The LRC continued to provide services to students who were struggling academically, supporting their learning needs with tutoring, learning skill development, and study skills, and adding testing services, disability services, and a writing lab. A centralized academic advising service was formalized to address the needs of struggling students considering other academic majors and those of exploratory students who were having difficulty narrowing their choices to a single major. With the addition of both career placement and career development services, students could seek advice about career options related to their major, define future career goals, better connect that information to the suitability of their career goals as related to academic difficulties they were having, and even seek experiences that would help to confirm their choices. These LRC changes helped to formalize some of the informal collaboration occurring between the LRC, faculty, and other service providers on campus. Val recalled that students needed to “learn to drive the process of choosing their own career path and

the steps they took to achieve their goals differently and, in many cases, more intentionally.” She indicated that those who entered the institution saying “I want to be an xyz.” and those entering saying “I love xyz, what can I do with it?” could equally be served. She felt that many who came to the institution with a career path in mind didn’t always understand how a particular major connected to a specific career path, and those who knew what they enjoyed without having defined a career path needed help to figure out the job- related applications for what they loved. Combining these several service packages responded to student needs in an integrated manner, while providing better staff support across service areas and addressing the former deficiencies in each service. Furthermore, specific programming was added to support the institution’s mission related to addressing students’ “callings” through community service and other volunteer opportunities. Each change and addition was carefully defined to match the new institutional mission and strategic plan, and each new staff member was trained and ingrained with the need to fully live the brand. By the end of the 1990s, the name of the LRC was changed to encompass the full scope of service, becoming the Career, Academic, Service, Training, Learning, and Exploration Center (CASTLE), which was also a nod to the institution’s first and oldest building on campus, a stone fortress that resembled a medieval castle. These changes also addressed staffing issues and the institution’s need to connect campus services into the new institutional mission and strategic plan. Rather than having several smaller services each managed by a single, over-worked person, combining the LRC and Career Center also combined staff work energy. Staff could now more easily support each others’ individual efforts, but could also plan services jointly and in conjunction with the institutional mission to better serve

students. To this end, David, the Associate Director of the CASTLE was hired with the understanding that he would not only be the campus specialist in career services but that he would also provide academic advising and support all services offered in the CASTLE. At this point in the process, the question was whether or not integrating these services would, indeed, help to more effectively address not only recruitment but also retention of students.

### **Growth and Development of the CASTLE**

Upon reflection, Val recalled that combining services worked well immediately and “almost fell together in perfect alignment.” She stated, as well, that faculty, staff, and students all seemed to respond well immediately to their new “united front,” but that she also “felt that it was clear that what we started was going to need some fine-tuning, and that there were probably some more changes coming.” Val said that combining services had much to do with how the campus itself viewed services and programs with a critical eye, but that the more they fine-tuned what they put in place, the more they realized that additional support and services were needed and pursued adding new staff and programming to the changes already in place.

Val’s first intentional efforts were aimed toward building credibility with faculty. Nora stated, “You can’t just tell faculty that you are something new. You have to show faculty that you are something new, and that what you have to offer is of value to them, or they aren’t going to buy what you are selling.” She said that she worried about what would happen to the LRC’s reputation when Career Services was added since Career Services hadn’t been viewed positively on campus. She and Val discussed how to be intentional about how, and to whom, they would advertise the new service. Initially, they

agreed that they needed to try to get high profile faculty on board. Val began to meet with faculty who had been supportive of LRC services to more completely explain the concept of career advising and why they felt that it would work well on campus. Part of her plan was to show how they could support and enhance what faculty were already doing. Nancy was one such faculty member.

### **A Faculty Perspective**

Nancy, like Nora and Val, had had a long tenure on campus. She was very familiar with the institution's evolution and strongly believed that the new institutional mission and strategic plan would move the school in the right direction. "Our students often identify a desire to serve others as important – maybe the mission field or overseas - places there aren't a lot of services even in [the Midwest] – this idea of making the world a better place. I thought adding this idea of calling was great and that it encompassed so much that we hadn't been addressing in the past. This current generation of students, in particular, seem to see things more globally in terms of their impact on the world."

Because she provided academic advising to Biology and pre-professional majors, Nancy had encountered many students who struggled in gateway courses, such as General Biology and General Chemistry. "I would ask struggling students why they had chosen their major and many couldn't clearly articulate why beyond wanting to help others." Because the LRC provided tutoring, Nancy and Val had been working together on strategies to support Biology and pre-professional majors in gateway courses. Val had also been informally supporting Nancy in advising students who were unlikely to make it through a Biology-related degree program but who had not yet changed majors. Nancy indicated that when Val described career advising "a lightbulb went off." She said she

immediately thought it would work well with their students, and although she didn't want to necessarily speak for all faculty, she did say that those she spoke with about the "new LRC's" services agreed with her opinion about the career advising idea. Nancy also stated that all degree programs seemed to have a small cadre of students who weren't successful, or who just seemed to be a bit misplaced within the major, that faculty didn't know how to help. She said that she also thought most faculty were pleased to be able to consult about problem students and to have a formalized structure to help define when they should pass a student over to the CASTLE.

### **Leadership Development**

In addition to building credibility with faculty, Val stated that she had begun to realize that she needed additional knowledge and training. "I had worked with struggling students as a professor as well as in the LRC, but I didn't really have any formal training related to at-risk students." Val indicated that although she was excited about how students seemed to be reacting to the new support structure, she wondered how combining elements of career development and the new academic advising structure would affect their overall cognitive development. Would struggling students be able to connect to the learning support necessary to be successful academically, while also defining elements of personal career development and connecting that to their own calling as well as to the academic processes necessary to pursue their life goals? Val began a doctorate in post-secondary leadership with an emphasis in counseling hoping to study the correlation between students' cognitive development and academic advising preference. She stated that "Although I didn't find that there was a correlation between students' cognitive development and academic advising preference, I did learn much of

what I needed to know in order to lead this kind of comprehensive service during my doctoral program.” In addition, she sought training through a NACADA Summer Institute program that helped her more fully understand the nuances of academic advising, and career advising in particular. What she learned helped to not only inform their planning process in general, but to also help define what would become their future training plan for new employees.

### **Adding Staff**

David, the Associate Director of the CASTLE, was the first new employee of the new office. He was hired with the understanding that he would not only provide both standard career development and career recruitment functions, but also add an emphasis in community service opportunities to help guide students toward identifying their own calling, as well as learning the basics of academic advising and career advising. David indicated that he joined the institution with career services experience, but knew immediately that he would also need to be intentional about honing his skill set. “I didn’t know anything at all about a calling, and I hadn’t done any academic advising professionally.” He stated that he had not participated in academic advising as a student either. “I’m sure there was academic advising available, but mostly I just took the courses listed in the catalog in the order they suggested. I don’t remember talking to anyone about the classes I took semester by semester.” At the next available opportunity, he also attended a NACADA institute and worked closely with Val to understand more about student support and how to work with at-risk students.

David and Val both reported that, although working together was helpful, it was still very clear that they needed more staff to provide CASTLE services in a way that

really addressed student needs. Over the next 10 years, staff continued to both fine-tune and grow CASTLE services, adding several additional staff members and subdividing responsibilities into emphasis areas.

### **Learning Support Services**

General learning skills development and tutoring were both services offered through the LRC. However, after the CASTLE was created and faculty began to more intentionally refer struggling students, a staff person was added to be the learning specialist on campus. Jayne was the wife of a faculty member and had been teaching developmental English as an adjunct faculty member. She and her husband had both worked overseas for a number of years and had experience with international students. Val reported, “Our new recruiting efforts included reaching out to our mission field to recruit internationally. Over the course of several years, we increased the international presence on campus.” She went on to explain that although the institution had added an international student service, its function was primarily related to visa status and compliance, and with campus and community outreach as a way to foster global understanding. Its purpose was not to support international students academically or to provide English as a second language support. Val indicated that although many international students are very diligent academically, there were aspects of the U.S. education system that were confusing to them, as well as significant differences in expectations for writing and differing ability levels in deciphering idiomatic speech patterns. Jayne, with international experience as well as credentials that qualified her to work with students in developmental coursework, was an ideal hire. Jayne said that she provides supplemental instruction and support to international students, as well as to any

other student struggling with writing or reading skills. “My emphasis area is to support students who need writing, reading, and speaking support. Like everyone else, I support the advising initiative by acting as a secondary advisor to this group of struggling students, by consulting with their faculty advisor if they have one, and by helping guide them toward majors that match their academic skills better.” Jayne indicated, as well, that she participated in all of the large advising events, such as new student registration during orientation and advanced registration during each semester, working primarily with students who have not yet decided on an academic major. She stated that, like David, she hadn’t used academic advising in college so didn’t really understand what academic advising was. However, after working through training with Val and David, she appreciated academic advising in general, and career advising in particular.

“Students who struggle are at sea and we won’t keep them in school if they can’t change course quickly and as easily as possible.” She reflected “Career advising tells them not only what they want to know, but also what they need to know, in order to make good decisions. I see it as a decision-making process where you have all the pieces you need to make the right decisions. How can you succeed in school if you don’t know what you are doing or why you are there?” In particular, Jayne lamented the plight of students who don’t read or write well. She said that, in her opinion, reading and writing are the two core skills everyone must have to succeed in school and in life, and students who struggle with one or both tend to perform poorly in their majors. “Students who don’t do one or both well have a tough time being successful in any endeavor.” Jayne identified these as the largest group of students who enter the institution with a major but who, when they

encounter academic difficulties, become undecided about their major and seek advising in the CASTLE.

### **Disability Services**

Disability Services was added to the LRC after the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 was signed into law. At that time, there were only a handful of students enrolled in the service. According to the American Psychological Association (2015), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and defines categories of disability that are covered under the law. Within higher education, the ADA protects students with disabilities against discrimination in admissions, academics, and research, assuming they are otherwise equally qualified when compared against other students (APA, 2015). In 2008, the ADA was amended, broadening the definition of disability. Between 1990 and 2008, more children than ever before were documented with disabilities. Many more individuals with disabilities entered higher education requiring appropriate accommodations, including academic support (APA, 2015). By the late 2000s, it had become very apparent that there were enough students on campus with special needs that the CASTLE needed a full-time professional to provide services. Kara joined the CASTLE team from the public school system with experience supporting students with disabilities. She stated, “My primary function is to work with students with disabilities. I coordinate with faculty and manage tests, ensure they find the right help through our supplemental instruction program, and help them develop learning strategies that support their particular learning needs. I also act as a secondary advisor for them and work with the student and major professor as well.” Kara indicated that she participated in large

advising events, using the career advising with students who had not yet decided on a major. She said, as well, that any student who disclosed a disability before an orientation event usually started the registration process with her. Kara reported that advising students with disabilities connects very well to career advising. “Students with disabilities need to understand how their major connects to their career aspirations, but they also really need to understand the impact of their disability on the reality of that career choice; what are the obstacles they may face and how do they need to prepare for them in advance.”

### **Vocation and Mentoring**

Tate was the last member to join the CASTLE team. Although it initially made sense to connect an emphasis on experiential learning and community service in support of the institutional mission related to helping students determine their own personal calling to David’s career services, in reality there were just too many pieces for him to manage, even with the support of other staff in the CASTLE. Over a number of years, both recruiting and retention efforts had gained momentum and yielded a greater number of students as well. Although Tate did not come from an education background or experience that included the concept of a vocational calling, he had considerable experience in mentoring programs and service-learning. He stated, “I was a student here but the emphasis on vocational calling wasn’t a part of the university then. I found the idea intriguing and also thought that I could find a connection between the work I had been doing to get students involved in non-academic kinds of things - trying to teach students the value of reaching out to contribute to the local and global community, being aware of their impact on and place in the world and that sort of thing - with the concept.”

Tate said that he didn't believe students could identify a vocational calling if they did not have a grasp of basic occupational interest patterns and career related values. Like other CASTLE staff, Tate supports large advising events and works with undecided students. In addition, he works with students who want or need to change their major but are unsure of what to change it to after several semesters on campus. He reported that in addition to helping students who already have a career path in mind to find a calling, he has found it is possible to help students who have a vocational calling but not a career path to work backwards into a career that supports their calling. "I have learned that career path and calling are symbiotic. I think that we have to advise students in a way that they will have both, know how they are tied together, and can serve both purposes in a meaningful way."

### **Results Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the career advising program at a single institution in order to learn about the decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from a more traditional model of advising. The ultimate goal of the study was to discover and examine why and how such decisions were made, how the change process occurred, how such a change affected the structure and function of the advising office, and staff impressions regarding the success of the model, in an effort to provide guidance for institutions that may wish to restructure their own advising program toward the career advising model of academic advising. Interviews with staff, a review of the institution's history, and a variety of written materials all provided insight into the institution's overall experience with this change.

**Research question 1.** The first element related to the broad research question was to identify the factors that led the institution to consider moving from the former model of academic advising to career advising. During the study, the researcher learned that there were two primary factors that led to change. First, the college developed a new mission and strategic plan that branded the institution in such a way that it was clear that services and programs would have to be adjusted in order to become consistent with the plan. Second, the leadership of the institution had already identified issues in both the LRC and Career Services that required improvement, and making the changes identified would help better connect each to the new institutional mission and strategic plan.

**Research question 2.** The second element related to the broad research question was to explore the decision-making process that occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising. During the study, the researcher learned that decision-making processes were intentionally connected to the institution's new mission and strategic plan. The administrator responsible for enrollment management attended a conference at which she first encountered career advising. She recognized its potential to address staffing needs and credibility in two college units, as well as its possibility for serving student needs in a way that would improve retention.

**Research question 3.** The third element related to the broad research question was to examine the implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising. During the study, the researcher learned that the implementation process was led by the administrator responsible for enrollment management and the LRC unit director. The process

ultimately included combining two college units, an immediate staff change, expansion of services, and multiple staff additions over several years.

**Research question 4.** The fourth element related to the broad research question was to learn about the experiences of practitioners at this institution related to which administrative decision-making processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising. During the study, unit staff unanimously expressed the belief that the overall decision-making process was both effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising. In particular, staff identified that connecting decision-making to the institutional mission and strategic plan provided a direction for planning within college units. The administrator responsible for enrollment management and the LRC unit director both indicated that they believed the decision to combine two units was the key to making the changes necessary to support the new institutional mission and strategic plan in a way that addressed problems in both units as well as supporting retention efforts on campus.

**Research Question 5.** The fifth element related to the broad research question was to learn about the experiences of practitioners at this institution related to which implementation processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising. During the study, the researcher learned that staff believed the implementation processes went well. Staff identified that the changes defined by careful decision-making showed that connecting two units would address deficiencies in both, providing additional support for each director as well as improving credibility of associated staff and services at the institutional level. The administrator responsible for enrollment management and the LRC unit director both spoke about implementing

change that ultimately required removing a staff member. Each identified that it is important to have staff that are invested in the success of the changes occurring and that full implementation is unlikely to be successful with a dissenting voice in a position of leadership. Staff also indicated that implementation processes must include the possibility for making adjustments to the plan. It was clear that additional fine-tuning would be required and, in this case, the fine-tuning occurred over several years resulting in additional changes related to how services would be provided by the unit as well as in the documents created to describe services.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study examined the experiences of individuals at an institution that moved from a traditional academic advising model to career advising using a single-case research design. To foster the necessary discovery and examination of the case, the researcher used a broad research question and five specific sub-questions to address the separate elements of that experience. The research questions are as follows:

Broad Research Question: What was the experience of an institution that moved from a traditional academic advising model to career advising?

Research Question 1: What factors led the institution to consider moving from the former model of academic advising to career advising?

Research Question 2: What decision-making process occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising?

Research Question 3: What implementation processes occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising?

Research Question 4: Based on the experiences of practitioners at this institution, which administrative decision-making processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising?

Research Question 5: Based on the experiences of practitioners at this institution, which administrative implementation processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising?

In addition, subsequent supporting procedural questions were used to further probe how the change affected the structure and function of the advising office itself, the impact on staff, and staff impressions of the success of the model.

### **Limitations**

During the course of this study, the researcher noted two factors that could have influenced the conclusions presented. First, and foremost, each institution has its own settings and contexts that affect change. This was an institution where the decision-making and implementation processes went well. Although decision-making and implementation processes were fine-tuned after the two units merged and career advising became the chosen model of academic advising, the initial processes went according to plan. However it is unlikely that other schools considering career advising would be in the midst of wholesale institutional change at the same time a change in advising model was being considered. At this institution, change was desired, invited, and expected. Many campus offices were under review and many were experiencing change at the same time. Institutional leadership intentionally sought new ways of thinking to address institutional needs in connection with the new institutional mission and strategic plan. In an environment that is not experiencing wholesale change, any change that occurs stands out. Those involved may not be as receptive to change, may not be openly seeking new ideas, and may not recognize the innovative ideas that may best address institutional needs. The unique set of circumstances that positioned this institution to be particularly open to change are not always present and cannot be created to facilitate receptivity to a new approach.

A second limitation might be that the researcher was unable to interview staff that are no longer at the institution. All faculty and staff interviewed are current employees of the college. Between 1996 and the present, there have been a handful of other staff members, including the former director of career services who lost his position after the units merged. Existing staff clearly represented that they believe career advising was a positive change at the college, but those who have been removed, or removed themselves, from the institution, might not agree with those currently there. The perspective on the shift to career advising shared by the current staff may not fully represent the experiences of all those involved over time, and so the case as presented may be similarly limited.

## DISCUSSION

This case study examined the career advising program at a single institution, learning about the decision making and implementation processes that occurred to move the institution to this advising model, as well as staff perceptions about the process and use of the model. A review of the literature illuminated several factors that suggested career advising was a desirable model of academic advising. Gordon (2006) noted that students require assistance as they navigate the academic, departmental, and university requirements necessary to complete a degree, in addition to connecting academic learning to the world of work. Gordon (2006) also asserted that advising and career development processes most often occur independently of one another in institutions of higher learning. A review of the literature also revealed that both academic advising and career development are closely linked to student retention and progression over the course of a degree program (Cuseo, n.d.; Drake, 2011; Hughey, Burton Nelson, Damminger, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009; Tinto, 2000). In learning about the decision-making and

implementation processes used, the researcher was able to note some of the factors that played a part in this institution's process and that were important in terms of choosing career advising as the advising model that was best suited to this institution's needs.

**Leadership.** Bolman and Deal (1991) developed frames to help conceptualize different approaches to change. Each frame suggests that how leaders choose to lead will affect the change. The career advising model was discovered by the administrator responsible for enrollment management, an individual who was mindful not only of the wholesale change occurring at the institutional level, but also of issues within both academic advising and career development services available on campus. The college sought change, initially, from a symbolic perspective, focusing on a new vision for the institution. Once the new mission and strategic plan were in place, she was free to pursue change within LRC and Career Services units. She knew that part of the institution's strategic plan was to improve retention rates and that both academic advising and career services were linked to student retention. She knew, as well, that each single-person unit needed additional staff support, that there were credibility issues within each unit, and that the new institutional direction required every unit and service on campus to seek ways to support student retention which would likely mean addressing the scope of services available in each unit. It was at that point that she encountered the career advising model of academic advising.

Leadership was an important factor discovered in this study. Those who lead must understand institutional context and setting, but must also recognize a good idea when they encounter one. The administrator responsible for enrollment management indicated that she didn't attend the NACADA conference with the belief that she would

find a new or innovative idea to connect to the needs of the institution, nor did she attend expecting to find an answer about how to handle the changes needed in these two units, but her mind was open to new ideas in a way that helped that indefinable spark of inspiration connect for her. She saw the possibilities in career advising in terms of helping to address each office's needs, and linked those possibilities to her institution's need for improved retention rates.

**Institutional context and setting.** If the administrator responsible for enrollment management did not have a full understanding of the institution's needs it would have been very difficult to validate that career advising was the right idea. Because the institution pursued a new mission and strategic plan, it was important to rebrand the institution. That new brand needed to encompass the campus at large, and any subsequent change in staffing or staff responsibilities, within the scope of service in units, or in developing strategic plans within units needed to connect to the new institutional mission and strategic plan. In this study, understanding the institutional context of wholesale change was of significant importance. Change itself was desired and actively sought. Those involved were looking for new and different ideas, making it more possible to recognize and be receptive to innovative concepts. In this institutional context, career advising was a programmatic change that directly addressed an institutional need.

**The human factor.** When an institution rebrands, faculty and staff must learn to live the new brand. Bolman and Deal's (1991) frames include one that describes how leaders approach change with a focus on the people involved. They describe that this approach emphasizes the support of staff through personal empowerment, training, and

being responsive to their needs. When the administrator responsible for enrollment management discovered career advising, she brought the model to staff for consideration. She believed that combining the LRC and Career Services would provide support for each single-person unit while helping to better connect each unit toward the institution's student retention planning. She hoped, as well, that through combining units the director of career services would feel less overwhelmed helping him to more fully buy-in to the new institutional mission and strategic plan. Again, because the institution itself was experiencing significant change, staff were already primed for the occurrence of change. When many campus offices are making changes, it is perhaps easier for staff to be receptive to, and buy in to, new ideas. Although the director of career services was ultimately removed, the study confirmed that addressing the needs of staff is important.

In this case, the units were combined for long enough to determine that a staffing change needed to be made. Both the administrator responsible for enrollment management and the director of the LRC identified that successful change has something to do with the combination of staff involved. Experimenting with staff roles, adjusting staff workloads, and allowing staff to control parts of the change is necessary for success. At this institution, the issue of staffing has been addressed several times throughout the change process, first by eliminating the director of career services and hiring someone new, and later as each new staff member was added. Staff needs were also addressed by offering opportunities for training and also putting a formal training program in place for new employees.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this study was to explore the career advising program at a single institution. In an effort to provide insight and guidance for institutions considering restructuring their own advising model, the study examined the decision making and implementation processes that occurred as a means to move the institution to the career advising model. Several implications for practice were identified through completion of this study.

**Factors leading to the decision.** The first element related to the broad research question was to identify the factors that led the institution to consider moving from the former model of academic advising to career advising. During the study, the researcher learned that there were two primary factors that led to change.

*Institutional Context.* Prior to making the choice to change advising models, this college was already experiencing significant change. In response to a decline in recruitment and retention levels, this college rewrote its institutional mission and created a new strategic plan, and it took the better part of a year to fully ingrain new institutional branding within the culture of the school. Although it is unlikely that most institutions considering a change to career advising would also be experiencing wholesale institutional change at the same time, this factor serves as a reminder that for institution-wide changes to work, they must respond to both institutional mission and strategic planning. Bolman and Deal's (1991) frames can be of use to institutions that wish to conceptualize ways to approach change and will include considering elements of institutional structure, a focus on the people involved, consideration of resources and goals, and connecting the new vision to the traditions and history of the institution.

According to Bolman and Deal (1991), although not all change requires inclusion of all frames, the greater the amount of change involved, the more intentionally each frame should be regarded. The symbolic frame includes considering institutional traditions and connecting them to the change. Those affected by the change need to feel inspired and understand the vision while believing that the changes will be important to the institution and their part in effecting the change is meaningful. This institution was intentional about considering their own institutional history and traditions. As a result, they chose to address vocational calling at the institutional level. In addition, they determined that the institution must be fully rebranded, necessitating buy-in from all campus employees in order to begin living the brand.

Bolman and Deal (1991) included looking at the human element that will be affected by the change through what they call the human resource frame. In order for staff to fully support change, they need to feel they have both a stake and a voice in the change, and that their needs are considered. This institution chose to include staff in the process so that each participated in the change rather than having it thrust upon them. The leadership considered employee morale within the process, listening to their perspectives and addressing concerns. At the same time, leadership had to consider goal-setting, intentionally assuring that goals were clearly defined for staff and that any changes required within existing institutional structures were well-planned. In this case, when the institution chose a new mission and direction, units and services related to retention were reviewed and staff voices were included in that process. Because the leadership were already aware of staffing deficiencies and scope of services in both the LRC and Career Services, both directors were an integral part of the conversation,

contributing their own thoughts and ideas to the changes that ultimately resulted in the creation of the CASTLE.

Finally, elements of the political frame were included, such as garnering support for change by dealing with interest groups and their agendas, building coalitions among different groups, and finding ways to negotiate conflicts. This institution attempted to be as transparent as possible from the beginning of planning through to the final phases of implementation. Goals developed were connected carefully to the new institutional mission and strategic plan, and were explained fully to campus constituencies. The administrator responsible for enrollment management recognized the potential in the career advising model but if she had not been able to persuade others to consider the model it is unlikely that career advising would have been chosen. However, because all were included in the institution's change process and understood the new goals for the institution, and because the administrator was able to persuade staff by explaining how career advising would help meet the new goals as well as potentially helping with staff shortages, the shift was made to career advising. Having clear goals, considering various options that might meet those goals, and building supportive coalitions through persuasion and negotiation are all important factors during change processes.

*Unit context.* At the time institutional change occurred, the leadership had already identified that there were issues in both the LRC and Career Services. Both units were short-handed and it was clear that staffing needs must be addressed in order for either unit to meet the new institutional context. It was also clear that the new institutional plan would require that services be adjusted. However, without having defined the new institutional mission and strategic plan, and determining how the college

would be branded, change at the unit level would have been premature. When the LRC and Career Services were combined, it was not only in response to needs in each unit, but also in response to the new institutional direction.

**Institutional decision making process.** The second element was an exploration of the decision-making process that occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising. During the study, the researcher learned how the new model of advising was found and delineated the reasons that led to the decision to change to career advising.

As described by Nora, issues within both the LRC and Career Services had already been identified when work on the new institutional mission and strategic plan began. Although she knew that any changes within campus units would need to be consistent with the new mission and plan, she had not yet determined how to manage staffing, credibility, or scope of service issues within either office. Discovering the career advising model of academic advising was essentially serendipity. To Nora's credit she recognized that career advising connected with new institutional efforts toward student retention, and that it had the potential to address several issues they were having in the two units. Part of leadership is being open to new ideas and recognizing a moment of inspiration when it occurs. In addition, it may also be that during times of extreme change, those involved must think differently than before. If institutional goals are being redefined then how one thinks about institutional needs also has to be redefined with the new context in mind.

**Institutional implementation processes.** The third element focused on the processes connected to the implementation of the shift to career advising. The research

illuminated how the change occurred, including that the change was implemented over several years as the need for services grew and numbers increased at the college.

Implementation at this institution was an intentional process that included careful goal-setting and planning, a review of staff, and adherence to the new institutional branding.

The change in advising model was planned in conjunction with, and defined by, the new institutional branding. In order for unit change to be successful, faculty, staff and students all needed to understand why the change was needed and how the needs of students would be addressed better by combining units. Constituencies on campus also needed to see unit staff as credible and competent in performing their responsibilities within the new office design. Because academic advising and career development both support retention, it was clear that problems within each unit would have to be addressed in order to strengthen not only the units themselves, but also as a way to support the institution's retention efforts. Combining the units gave each single-person unit a second staff person to support services and programming, to work with to plan new services and programming, and who had the potential to offer moral support. Combining units provided an opportunity to formalize advising for undecided students, and allowed advising and career development processes to work in concert.

As institutional recruiting changes increased enrollment, new services were added. The results of the study emphasized that initial change must remain fluid enough that services and programming have a chance to grow in the direction they need to, both in conjunction with the institutional plan and in response to student needs.

**Effective decision making processes.** The fourth element was to learn about the experiences of practitioners at this institution related to which administrative decision-

making processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising. The research revealed initial decision-making processes that supported the initial transition, as well as subsequent fine-tuning of services and staffing.

In terms of decision-making, the study revealed the value of having staff involved who not only had a stake in decisions being made, but who were also able to understand both the historical context and new direction of the institution. The administrator responsible for enrollment management recognized the potential for use of career advising at the institution, and played a leadership role in combining the LRC and Career Services units in response to issues in both. The director of the LRC also participated in a leadership role, acting first as a co-director and later as the sole director of the combined unit. The director of Career Services was included in the decision-making process related to combining both units but, in the end, his perspectives are not as well-represented in how the new unit developed because he wasn't there for the largest part of the evolution of services. The decisions made in effecting these changes were shaped by the new institutional direction as well as by student needs. Because staff numbers were small, fewer individuals needed to be involved in the process and those involved had a direct stake in the outcome. As the CASTLE has grown over time, each new staff member has been a part of the change, and their perspectives are included during the decision-making process.

The study also revealed the importance of making the right decisions about staff. If personnel do not fully support wholesale change when it occurs on campus, or for some reason do not believe in changes on a smaller scale within units, that voice of dissention will interfere with the message being sent to the rest of campus. The Career

Services director was unable to support the institutional changes at large. As a result, changes effected in a unit to support the institution's new direction were also not supported and he was removed from the unit. The staff member hired to take his place was hired with the understanding that services in the unit would need to connect with the new institutional context and that would affect unit planning and services, and each new person hired since has also been hired with that understanding. Each new staff person also participates in a training program designed to help them fully embrace the institutional brand and understand how unit services connect.

**Effective implementation processes.** The fifth element was to learn about which implementation processes practitioners believed were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising. The research revealed implementation processes that allowed initial change to occur effectively and in a way that supported future refinement of services and staffing.

Staff involved in the implementation of career advising talked about the value of formalizing change by branding it, and connecting unit branding to institutional branding. New staff members are required to learn the institutional mission so that it can influence their work within units. In the CASTLE, staff chose a unit mission statement that connects to elements of the institutional mission. During planning sessions, they intentionally consider if their direction is in alignment with the institution's direction and if what they hope to do will help meet institutional efforts toward better student retention. They indicated that they believed that branding provided credibility to the unit by helping other campus constituencies better understand a unit's scope of services within the context of the institution. Through this, it becomes possible to embed a unit's new scope

of services more fully across the institution. Staff identified professional development as also being a very important part of implementation of change. Making adjustments in services and programming sometimes also means that personnel must seek additional training or be trained in different ways than before. Each new staff member added over the several years to full implementation was specifically trained using the institutional mission and strategic plan so that they could better understand the history of the institution and why the decision was made to move in the direction chosen. New staff were also trained specifically to use career advising when working with students, in addition to connecting career advising to their specific emphasis area within the unit.

**Trustworthiness as applied to implications for practice.** At a different institution, those involved in considering a change in advising model are likely to have had an entirely different set of experiences and perspectives to contribute and different variables may be at play. That would mean that what was revealed during this study is only directly relevant to this specific group of people, at this specific school, at this moment in time. However, understanding the experience of change at a single college can still inform such change at other institutions. There is significant value in learning about the processes used, the perspectives of those involved, and noting the positives and negatives of both the processes used and outcomes gained. Once the experience of change at this college is understood, another institution may be better able to structure change within their unique context and setting

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A thorough review of the literature was conducted, using multi-source databases of articles, journals, and books, including Galileo, Google Scholar, and other library

based resources. In addition, searches of clearinghouses on advising and career related national organization websites, including the National Academic Advising Association, National Association of Colleges and Employers, and National Career Development Association, were conducted. However, no published evidence-based articles were discovered. As such, this study can be considered preliminary research. Much more applied research must be done in the field before the effects of using career advising can be fully understood, before knowing if the model works as expected, if it serves students well, and if varied permutations of the model that respond to specific institutional contexts work as well.

Other career advising programs should be studied so that those considering the model may have other road maps to choose from in terms of how to move from their own current advising structure to career advising. Institutions of higher learning are individualized and a single pathway may not work for all institutional contexts.

It may also be important to consider both qualitative and quantitative research of career advising's impact on students and impact on retention. For institutions that use other models of advising, but that may be looking for something new to add value to their existing model, research should be conducted to examine the impact of combining models on both student success and retention. Ultimately, additional research must be conducted and published because, without more evidence-based research, it will be difficult to prove to practitioners that this model of academic advising is not at least equal to, if not better than, other models of advising in supporting student success and retention in multiple contexts and settings.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the experience of an institution that moved from a traditional model of academic advising to career advising, offering insight into the decision making and implementation processes used in addition to staff perceptions about the process and use of the model. The study revealed that there were several key factors of importance in making the shift to career advising. First and foremost, each institution has a unique context and settings. In this case, the institution was experiencing wholesale change as a result of redefining its mission and strategic plan. Second, leadership was important. Leaders needed to understand their own institution but also be open-minded in a way that would allow them to recognize good, new ideas. Moreover, once an idea is found, a leader must be able to persuade and negotiate in a way that helps staff connect with the idea. Third, the study revealed that involving staff in the process was important. Staff that understood new goals and felt they had a voice in the discussion had a greater stake in the change. Furthermore, the combination of staff who were implementing the changes mattered. Understanding this college's processes, as well as the factors that were illuminated, may enrich the discussion in a way that can be of help to schools considering adopting career advising as their model of academic advising.

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## APPENDIX A

## PROTOCOL

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	FOLLOW-UP QUESTION OPTIONS
<p><b>Broad Question:</b> What was the experience of an institution that moved from a traditional academic advising model to career advising?</p>		
<p><b>RQ I:</b> What factors led the institution to consider moving from the former model of academic advising to career advising?</p>		
	<p>Describe the issues or circumstances that started the discussion about changing the advising system.</p>	
		<p>Describe how you knew you had a problem or unaddressed need.</p>
		<p>Was an assessment done, or data gathered, to support the need for change?</p>
		<p>What were some of the other potential options discussed?</p>
		<p>What was it about career advising that seemed to best address the issues or circumstances?</p>

<b>RQ 2:</b> What decision-making process occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising?		
	Describe the process associated with making the actual decision.	
		Who was the person who initiated the process?
		Is there a set process or structure in place at the institution for proposing and approving such changes?
		Was data collected and a report created?
		Were there meetings?
		Was there formal documentation? (A proposal, other?)
		How were timelines formed?
		How much time elapsed between the decision to make the change and effecting the change?
	Who was involved in the decision-making process, and why?	
		Who determined who should be included in the decision-making process?
		Were staff included in the decision-making process? At what point in the decision-making process was staff included?

		Did members of the campus community participate in the process? At what point in the process was the campus community included?
		What is your perception of how the initial announcement was received by staff? ...by the campus community?
		Did the staff recognize issues that the decision-makers had not?
		If so, how were these figured into the decision-making process?
<b>RQ 3:</b> What implementation processes occurred as a means to move the institution from the former model of advising to career advising?		
	Describe the process of implementing the new model	
	Once the decision was made, and the initial change occurred, how did it go?	
		Were there unanticipated challenges?
		If so, how were they managed?
	Once the change was made, what was the impact on staff and campus community?	
		How was staff buy-in developed and supported?
		How was campus community buy-in developed and supported?

		Were any gaps in staff knowledge noted?
		Describe any special training needed to help staff develop competence in the new advising model.
		Were existing staff numbers adequate to manage coverage within the new model?
		Describe any changes in staffing, or changes within existing positions, required to effectively operate within the new advising model.
	In what ways did you evaluate the success of the change to career advising?	
	From your perspective, does the model work for your institution?	
		Describe the evidence, feelings, or data that support your perspective.
<b>RQ 4:</b> Based on the experiences of practitioners at this institution, which administrative decision-making processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising?		
	Describe the administrative decision-making processes that you believe were the most effective and useful.	
	Looking back, is there anything that you would have done differently, in terms of decision-making process, to ensure that the process was as effective, useful, and successful as possible?	

<p><b>RQ 5:</b> Based on the experiences of practitioners at this institution, which administrative implementation processes were the most effective and useful in moving the institution to career advising</p>		
	<p>Describe the implementation processes that you believe were the most effective and useful.</p>	
	<p>Looking back, is there anything that you would have done differently, in terms of implementation, to ensure that the process was as effective, useful, and successful as possible?</p>	
	<p>What advice would you offer other institutions that might be considering making this change to their existing advising model?</p>	

APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

**Researcher's Statement**

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Laura Dean  
College of Education, Department of Counseling & Human  
Development  
(706) 542-6551 / ladean@uga.edu

**Co-Investigator:** Amy Hopkins, PhD Candidate  
College of Education, Department of Counseling & Human  
Development  
(470) 244-6224 / ahopkins@uga.edu

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine a career advising program to learn why the institution decided to combine advising with principles of career development, to understand both departmental and institutional decision-making for and during the transition, and to learn about staff development gaps, transition needs, and perceived impact on students.

You are being invited to participate because you currently work in a center that uses career advising and it is likely that you can provide some insight into these processes, procedures, perceived impact on students, etc.

**Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual or group interview that is intended to encompass no more than 60 – 90 minutes. The researcher may re-contact participants on an as-needed, limited basis to check information provided by individual participants.

The researcher will use a semi-structured interviewing approach that will include initial questions to help start the conversation within each interview session.

Initial questions address processes and procedures, although participants will be asked to provide a personal perspective when responding. In all cases, the participant may choose not to respond if questioning becomes uncomfortable.

Each interview will be recorded to ensure that the researcher is able to accurately represent participant responses. Participant names will not be included on recordings, ensuring a greater potential for confidentiality. Recordings will be deleted as soon as a written transcript can be made. Transcriptions will be secured in password protected files on a password protected computer.

### **Risks and discomforts**

There are no expected psychological risks, social or economic risks, legal risks, or physical risks associated with this study. Participants can withdraw from the study, at will, should an individual level of personal discomfort occur.

### **Benefits**

There are no expected direct benefits to participants taking part in the study. However, the study may provide enrichment to the field of academic advising by adding to available information about the career advising model of academic advising.

### **Incentives for participation**

Participants will not receive any incentives for participation in the study.

### **Audio/Video Recording**

Audio recordings will be made of each interview session. Recordings are needed to ensure the researcher can transcribe an accurate representation of data provided. Participants will not be identified by name on audio recordings. Recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet until they are transcribed. Once transcription is completed, recordings will be destroyed. Transcriptions will be stored in password protected files on a password protected computer.

### **Privacy/Confidentiality**

The data collected from participants will be connected to individual participants by a pseudonym. Participant's pseudonym will be kept on file in a locked cabinet so that, if necessary, the researcher will be able to check the accuracy of transcription prior to completion of the study.

The researcher will not release identifiable results of the study, to anyone other than the contributing participant, without written consent of the participant as required by law.

Even though the investigator will take all possible precautions to maintain confidentiality of data, and will emphasize to all participants that comments made during group

interviewing sessions should be kept confidential, please be aware that it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study prior to completion, the information/data collected from, or about, the participant up to the point of withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

### **If you have questions**

The Co-Investigator conducting this study is Amy Hopkins, a PhD candidate at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Amy Hopkins at [ahopkins@uga.edu](mailto:ahopkins@uga.edu) or at (470) 244-6224, or the Principal Investigator, Dr. Laura Dean at [ladean@uga.edu](mailto:ladean@uga.edu) or at (706) 542-6551. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at (706) 542-3199 or [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

### **Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:**

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.