

Melanie Woodard McGee's Personal Statement On Advising and Advising Administration

My approach to graduate business advising and advising administration is quite simple and straightforward. First and foremost, employ the Golden Rule – treat others (students/customers) as you would wish to be treated. By consistently putting yourself in the shoes of the customer, you approach your communications to that customer in a much more enlightened, empathetic, and relevant manner.

Beyond the Golden Rule, one must possess a genuine passion for facilitating the success of others, recognizing that the most effective leaders essentially ‘work themselves out of a job.’ In other words, a truly effective leader measures his/her ultimate success through the success of their charges, and the extent to which they develop their mentees/subordinates to effectively assume theirs and other leadership roles.

From a strategic perspective, an academic advisor must recognize that the student is both a customer to and a product of the program/university, and that the ultimate customer is that student's current or future employer. If the program/university does not produce a competitive, high quality product, it will quickly lose market share, as that employer will no longer desire to purchase (employ) what the university/program produces (i.e., our graduate business students).

As a program director and advisor, one assumes a very influential role, either a positive or negative one, in the overall quality development of that student (our product) – a responsibility that should not be taken lightly. Therefore, an advisor must recognize the extent to which they will impact, positively or negatively, the future success of their students, and the sustained success of their program/university.

As first generation college graduates, my older siblings and I were repeatedly reminded of how important it was to do well in our academic studies and, by all means, obtain a college degree. Though our father was a very successful entrepreneur, he was keenly aware that he was one that ‘beat the odds’ and wanted to ensure that his children had more opportunities to contribute and succeed as adults. Though he and my mother were passionate supporters of our academic pursuits, they were the first to acknowledge that they were in no position to advise or mentor us through the process.

Just as my father had learned the importance of surrounding himself with employees and professional peers who possessed the formal education and knowledge he lacked, my parents recognized the importance of exposing us to advisors and mentors who could knowledgeably guide us through the higher

education process. To ultimately see each of their three children complete not only a bachelor's degree, but a master's degree and professional certifications as well, both parents freely acknowledge that the educational accomplishments of their children were their greatest and most meaningful accomplishments in life.

I feel extremely fortunate that I had two of the finest 'life' advisors/mentors in my parents, and also that they encouraged me to seek out advice and mentoring from those individuals who could guide me through the higher education process. Advisors and mentors played a key role in the success that I have enjoyed in my career, but they also inspired me to do for others, what they had selflessly done for me.

Effective educational advising and mentoring is more than simply discussing various courses and degree programs. An effective advisor/mentor recognizes that he/she plays a very influential, and often pivotal, role in preparing the individual to competitively position themselves for years to come.

In summary, the importance of academic advising simply cannot be understated. If an advisor/mentor treats the advisee/mentee as he would expect or hope to be treated, the relationship should be a productive and meaningful advising relationship, and should yield maximum benefits for both the student and the educational institution.