



Skills and Competencies for Effective Academic Advising and Personal Tutoring

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Advising/personal tutoring has moved from the fringes of higher education to the center of student success initiatives. Advising professionals serve as faculty members, mentors, student advocates, and campus leaders. Drawing upon data from an empirical investigation regarding the professionalization of academic advising, we examine the critical aspects related to performing effective academic advising and personal tutoring. Using directed qualitative content analysis, data were examined for evidence of professional values, professional skills, professional behaviors, training, and continuing professional education and development. We consider the findings in comparison to NACADA's Core Values, the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education in support of student success by promoting excellence in academic advising (EAA), NACADA's Core Competencies of Academic Advising, Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Standards, UKAT Professional Framework for Advising and Tutoring, and United Kingdom's National Occupational Standards.

Keywords: professional values, professional skills, professional behaviors, training, continuing professional education/development, directed content analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Academic advising and personal tutoring has moved from the fringes of higher education to find its place at the center of student success initiatives in higher education. Advising professionals, also known as academic advisors and personal tutors, serve as faculty members, mentors, student advocates, and campus leaders. United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring [UKAT] (2020), describes personal tutoring as “A purposeful personal relationship” in which an advisor/tutor “enables students to become autonomous, confident learners and engaged members of society. This ongoing and collaborative relationship connects students deeply to their institution, supporting them through their course and beyond.” NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising has developed strategic goals that include a focus on research and the scholarship of academic advising. NACADA (2006) described academic advising as:

...a series of intentional interactions with a curriculum, a pedagogy, and a set of student learning outcomes. Academic advising synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities, and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes.

Personal tutoring and academic advising, and our practice and understanding of it, is informed by the regional context in which it is practiced. The authors represent three different national and

advising/tutoring contexts. Craig is from the United States (US), in which academic advising is performed by people in at least two capacities: faculty advisors and primary-role advisors. Primary-role academic advisors are individuals whose job is solely devoted to advising (in contrast to faculty advisors, who also teach, do research, etc.). As a faculty activity to support students, academic advising has existed in some form since the colonial era (Cate and Miller, 2015). From 1870 to 1970, the number of majors and career options for students increased, “spawning new roles and positions, one of which was the academic advisor” (Kuhn, 2008, p. 5). Due to the continually expansive opportunities available, students required more guidance from trained professionals. The role of primary-role advisor was expanded and became more pronounced as schools began offering students the opportunity to choose electives (Schulenberg and Lindhorst, 2008). Although the advisor role was increasing in its importance and required people who had advanced skills, these roles were often viewed as clerical, and university officials had little interest in examining their importance and role of influence in the student college experience (Schulenberg and Lindhorst, 2008). Today, advising in the United States is practiced by faculty and primary-role advisors alike.

Mehvash is from United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has a large population of transient expatriate community. To cater to the needs of the diverse population, there are many different educational curricula (American, British, South Asian, etc.) in the country. This creates interesting challenges as student move from one nation’s curriculum at secondary education to another nation’s curriculum for higher education. This also makes it difficult to define advising in the country as it is heavily influenced by the curriculum of the college/university. As in the United States, the role of advising was viewed as clerical in nature and was initially often done by administrative assistants. As higher education evolved in this relatively new country, the role of academic advisors increased in importance and there was an increase in primary-role advisors. Additionally, faculty advisors were encouraged to develop skills in the area of advising. At Mehvash’s institution, academic advisors are staff/faculty advisors within each major/college. They are responsible for course advising, mentoring students within their academic units, and monitoring degree progression. Primary-role advisors with the advising office are responsible for working with students who need academic skills training and support for retention, persistence, and academic progression. Advising is organized in the Shared Split model (King, 2008) where students have advisors within their academic units for the duration of their studies in the university and an advising office that works with specific groups of students such as students exploring other majors or students on academic probation. This Shared Split model allows students to have long term advising relationships with faculty/staff academic advisors within their respective majors/college. It also offers additional advising supports for students who are academically struggling to enhance their chances for academic success.

Dionne is from the United Kingdom, in which almost all academic staff (equivalent to United States “faculty”) are asked to take on the role of personal tutor (Mynott, 2016). Personal tutors also teach and do research alongside administrative roles. The

personal tutoring role in the United Kingdom has evolved and changed over time (Grant, 2006). Traditionally the role stemmed from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, whereby personal tutors were provided to offer a parental role to students during the transition from home to university (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006). Historically, it was more of a role to support students with their academic skills and academic work. Today, the role is all-encompassing and personal tutors tend to take on a pastoral role in addition to academic support. Across the sector including nationally and internationally the personal tutoring role has various titles for example: Personal Tutor, Personal Academic Tutor, Academic Advisor, Academic Tutor, Academic Personal Tutor and Personal Development Tutor. Although there is a range of models of personal tutoring in the United Kingdom, two models are predominant. In one model, the personal tutor is responsible for supporting students pastorally, academically as well as their personal development. In the second model (see Earwaker, 1992), a personal tutor is responsible for the academic progress and personal development and a student services staff member has a full-time role as a welfare officer who provides the student with pastoral support. There is an assumption anyone who is an academic member of staff can be an academic advisor or personal tutor without any training, that it will “come naturally” (Owen, 2002; Gubby and McNab, 2013; McGill et al., 2020). Beyond the credentials required to be an academic/faculty member, there are no qualifications needed to perform personal tutoring in the United Kingdom. Many, personal tutors learn the specific skills requirements for personal tutoring on the job. However, in many United Kingdom institutions, in order to become an academic member of staff there is often a requirement of a doctoral qualification or an expectation that an individual is working toward a doctoral qualification. Increasingly, new academic staff are required as part of their probation to gain a professional recognition for teaching and/or supporting learning or training in learning theory and pedagogic practice for example, a Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) or equivalent. Some of these qualifications may include an element of training in the skills required to fulfill the personal tutor role.

Given the variety of functions advisors serve and the varied environments they operate in, it is critical to consider the essential competencies for advising professionals. Menke et al. (2018) found communication skills to be more important than knowledge of the curriculum, technology, teamwork/collaboration, critical thinking, having patience, or multicultural competence. They attributed the variation in necessary skills identified by participants to the variety of environments that advisors practice within. To consider the impact of learning opportunities on advisor evaluation and performance, McGill et al. (2020) found training of relational skills is often necessary but absent from advising training and professional development programs.

In this study, drawing upon data from an empirical investigation regarding the professionalization of academic advising, we examine the aspects related to performing academic advising and personal tutoring. Our chapter proceeds in five sections: literature review, methods, findings, discussion, and limitations/future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several organizations have established best practices for academic advising and personal tutoring in different national contexts. We highlight NACADA's Core Values (NACADA, 2017a), the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education in support of student success by promoting excellence in academic advising (EAA), NACADA's Core Competencies of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017c), Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), UKAT Professional Framework for Advising and Tutoring United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring [UKAT] (2020), and United Kingdom's National Occupations Standards [NOS] (2020).

Core values for advising, considered critical to the way that advising is done, are reflected in the actions of advising and are meaningful to the function of advising (Lochtie et al., 2018). NACADA is guided by a set of Core Values (NACADA, 2017a) reflecting the practice of academic advising globally in varied regional, cultural and educational contexts and roles. These core values include the virtues of respect, inclusivity, professionalism, integrity, caring, empowerment, and commitment. NACADA core values demonstrate the commitment advising professionals should demonstrate to their students, their institutions, and the professional practice of academic advising.

Additionally, NACADA has partnered with the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education in support of student success by promoting excellence in academic advising (EAA). This partnership resulted in the identification of nine aspirational standards for institutes of higher education globally called the Conditions of Excellence in Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017b). These aspirational conditions promote excellence in academic advising:

1. Institutional commitment: Getting buy-in from senior management for the important role of academic advising in student success;
2. Learning: Continuously building learning opportunities for advisors and ensure advising outcomes are assessed and aligned with institutional goals;
3. Improvement and the scholarship of advising: Engaging in evidence-based assessment and research;
4. Organization: Ensuring the structure of advising within an institution aligns with its mission and goals;
5. Equity, inclusion, and diversity: Advising policies should value equity, inclusion, and diversity;
6. Advisor selection and development: Empowering advisors through professional development opportunities and clear expectations
7. Collaboration and communication: Fostering collaborative partnerships to enhance advising;
8. Student purpose and pathways: Outlining pathways to student success and removing barriers to optimize learning; and
9. Technology enabled advising: Incorporating technology to strengthen advising practice.

According to EAA (NACADA, 2017b), institutes of higher education that exhibit excellence in advising should have an advising mission that aligns with the institute's own mission and strategic goals. The advising delivery system should be responsive to the changing needs of students as determined by ongoing assessment efforts. Advising should be a collaborative process and include the appropriate use of technology. The advisors should manifest the professional ethics and virtues of the advising field such as those identified in the NACADA Core Values.

NACADA's professional development committee developed the Core Competencies of Academic Advising (NACADA, 2017c) to define more nuanced work roles of academic advisors. They are divided into *relational* skills that academic advisors must demonstrate, *conceptual* areas advisors must understand, and *informational* knowledge advisors must master. These core competencies are designed to serve as models for training and assessment programs for primary-role advisors, faculty advisors, advising administrators, learning professionals, personal tutors, etc.

The core competencies model outlines several specific *relational* competencies:

1. Articulate a personal philosophy of academic advising;
2. Create rapport and build academic advising relationships;
3. Communicate in an inclusive and respectful manner;
4. Plan and conduct successful advising interactions;
5. Promote student understanding of the logic and purpose of the curriculum;
6. Facilitate problem solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting; and
7. Engage in on-going assessment and development of the advising practice (NACADA, 2017c, p. 3–4).

The *relational* competencies relate to the core skills described as daily actions that personal tutors must engage in for effective advising aimed at student success (Lochtie et al., 2018).

The *conceptual* component of the core competencies outlined by NACADA include an understanding of:

1. The history and role of academic advising in higher education;
2. NACADA's Core Values of Academic Advising;
3. Theory relevant to academic advising;
4. Academic advising approaches and strategies;
5. Expected outcomes of academic advising; and
6. How equitable and inclusive environments are created and maintained (NACADA, 2017c, p. 1–2).

The *informational* component includes knowledge of:

1. Institution specific history, mission, vision, values, and culture;
2. Curriculum, degree programs, and other academic requirements and options;
3. Institution specific policies, procedures, rules, and regulations;
4. Legal guidelines of advising practice, including privacy regulations and confidentiality;

5. The characteristics, needs, and experience of major and emerging student populations;
6. Campus and community resources that support student success; and
7. Information technology applicable to relevant advising roles (NACADA, 2017c, p. 2–3).

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) is intended to describe the essential mission, programs and services, leadership, and organizational structures of focal functional areas in student affairs as well as the skills, education, and knowledge that practitioners need to be effective (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2015). CAS are primarily concerned with student learning objectives from advising and what advising programs need to provide students so that can reach these learning objectives. For instance, within the CAS domains, knowledge acquisition and application, cognitive complexity, and practical competence demonstrate development that goes far beyond transactional information. The CAS domains of interpersonal competence and humanitarianism and civic engagement deal with forming meaningful relationships and appreciating cultural and human differences with a global perspective. The portion of the practical competencies dealing with effective communication also relate. The CAS domains of knowledge integration, cognitive complexity: reflective thinking, and intrapersonal development illustrate how students begin connecting knowledge they learn in their classes to other knowledge and make meaning of it. They consider how knowledge connects with their experiences. In this way, students become reflective of their identity and how their education is changing them. This intrapersonal development leads them to re-evaluate their values.

Although CAS underscore the importance of academic advising and incorporated literature from other foundational documents, they did not especially demonstrate skills and competencies advisors need to do advising well. The standards do give some framework to guide advising practitioners regarding role boundaries and responsibilities and especially provides learning outcomes for advising. For advisors and personal tutors to contribute to student learning and development, they must:

1. Identify relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes;
2. Articulate how the student learning and development outcomes align with the six CAS student learning and development domains and related dimensions;
3. Assess relevant and desirable student learning and development;
4. Provide evidence of impact on outcomes;
5. Articulate contributions to or support of student learning and development in the domains not specifically assessed; and
6. Use evidence gathered to create strategies for improvement of programs and services (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2015, p. 8–9).

The United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring [UKAT] (2020) lays out four core competencies personal tutors and academic

advisors need, to effectively support student success. One of the most important aims of the framework is to raise the recognition and perceived value of advising/personal tutoring. There are four components: three of the components – *conceptual*, *informational*, and *relational* are adapted from the NACADA Core Competences of Academic Advising. These components have a similar focus to the NACADA Core Competences (i.e., the *conceptual* component focuses on the understanding of tutors in terms of ideas and theories, the *informational* component is about tutors' knowledge and the *relational* component focuses on tutors' skills). The fourth component, *professional* is specific to the UKAT Framework and focuses on the commitment of tutors to their students, their institution, and the wider community. The *professional* component outlines four competencies:

1. Create and support environments that consider the needs and perspectives of students, and respect individual learners;
2. Appreciate students' views and cultures, maintain a student-centered approach and mindset, and treat students with sensitivity and fairness;
3. Commit to students, colleagues, and their institutions through engagement in continuing professional development, scholarly enquiry, and the evaluation of professional practices; and
4. Understand the implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement, and engage in on-going evaluation and development of advising and tutoring practice United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring [UKAT] (2020, p. 3).

The scheme is based on the submission of an e-portfolio of retrospective evidence of practice referenced against the competencies of the UKAT Professional Framework for Advising and Tutoring. It allows advisors and tutors to gain recognition for their practice and experience at one of three levels: Recognized Practitioner in Advising, Recognized Senior Advisor and Recognized Leader in Advising. UKAT are promoting the scheme to higher education institutions and encouraging them to support their academic advisors and personal tutors to gain recognition through participating in the scheme. The scheme is open to anyone in the United Kingdom higher education sector.

The National Occupations Standards [NOS] (2020) dictate good practice in personal tutoring and outline criteria as a benchmark for individuals who are undertaking the personal tutor role. The focus is around supporting student retention and achievement. These standards describe what a personal tutor needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out their role in a consistent way and to a nationally recognized level of competence. The NOS for personal tutoring consists of eleven standards, which are highlighted below:

1. Manage self, work relationships, and work demands;
2. Develop own practice in personal tutoring;
3. Create a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment;
4. Explore and identify learners' needs and address barriers to learning;

5. Enable learners to set learning targets and evaluate their progress and achievement;
6. Encourage the development of learner autonomy;
7. Enable learners to develop personal and social skills and cultural awareness;
8. Enable learners to enhance learning and employability skills;
9. Support learners' transition and progression;
10. Provide learner access to specialist support services; and
11. Contribute to improving the quality and impact of personal tutoring and its reputation within their own organization (p. 2)

In exploring effective personal tutoring and academic advising Lochtie et al. (2018) define the core values of the effective personal tutor. The core values are guiding principles and fundamental to providing effective student support and they need to be shared with staff and demonstrated consistently to have an impact on the student experience. They are:

1. High expectations: Challenging students, expecting them to make an effort and encouraging independence;
2. Approachability: Being friendly and easy for students to talk to;
3. Diplomacy: Being tactful and a mediator to calm a situation;
4. Being non-judgmental: Avoid making judgments or jumping to conclusions;
5. Compassion: Be concerned, supportive and caring;
6. The "equal partner, not superior" approach: Demonstrate mutual respect and a positive attitude, role model appropriate behavior;
7. Authenticity: Be authentic and selfless; and
8. Valuing students as individuals: Get to know your students, they want to feel that they matter (p. 33).

They state that the values are important in professional practice and that they are present in the way personal tutors respond to challenges. True core values are evident in how personal tutors undertake their role and help them feel that they are doing valuable and rewarding work. The core values represent what is important for personal tutors to consider in providing effective student support. For individuals to understand the core values they need to observe others demonstrating these core values.

In addition to the core values, Lochtie et al. (2018) highlight the core skills of the effective personal tutor, they are:

1. Building genuine rapport with your students: Develop a relationship with students through effective communication;
2. Active listening and questioning: Listen actively, observe and notice verbal and non-verbal communication;
3. Challenging: Set goals and encourage students to be independent learners;
4. Reflecting back and summarizing: Encourage students to reflect on their development and achievements, listen actively and paraphrase back to the student;

5. Developing independence and resilience: Encourage independence and help students to recognize that they can learn from failures;
6. Teamwork: Work effectively with colleagues;
7. Decision-making and problem solving: Make difficult decisions if necessary;
8. Role modeling: Demonstrate positive core values and be a role model for students;
9. Proactivity, creativity and innovation: Be proactive in terms of interacting with students, creative and innovative practices can support successful student retention;
10. Working under pressure: Tutoring can be challenging, ask for help and support from colleagues;
11. Consistency: Be consistent and reliable, let students know how to contact you and your availability;
12. Critical thinking: Model a critical thinking approach; and
13. Digital literacy: Use technology to support tutoring (p. 39).

To be an effective personal tutor, tutors need to practice the core values and use the core skills (Lochtie et al., 2018). Skills are about expertise, being competent and efficient and in terms of personal tutoring, they are about doing the role well. The core values underpin the core skills, personal tutors use these skills and decide which skills to use dependent on the context and the individual student. It is recognized that in using the core skills this takes time, practice and reflection.

Given the lack of a shared global definition of academic advising and personal tutoring alongside the lack of a universal pre-requisite training or degree, professionals in the field look to the following to provide standards of best practice for academic advising and personal tutoring. The NACADA Core Values and Core Competencies, the UKAT Professional Framework for Advising and Tutoring, the United Kingdom's National Occupational Standards, CAS, and the Gardner Institutes (EAA). There are similarities between these standards of advising and tutoring practice that this study investigates. The study explores the commonalities between the above noted standards of best practices in advising and tutoring, using directed qualitative content analysis in order to identify professional values, professional skills, behaviors, and training and continuing professional education necessary to practice academic advising and personal tutoring.

METHODS

Seventeen NACADA leaders from North America offered insight into a broad range of issues regarding the professionalization of academic advising. Leaders in the field of advising have a critical perspective to offer when studying the advisor/tutor role. With a combined 328 years of NACADA membership, a combined 402 years of advising experience, and a combined 469 years of higher education experience, the leaders in this study have seen the field evolve over four decades. They have worked on a variety of college campuses in a variety of roles. To qualify for the study, participants had to be involved in one of the following leadership roles: a commission chair, a

subject matter expert publishing about the professionalization of academic advising, or those who have held high office (e.g., presidents, board members, etc.) within the association. Many of them have offered these perspectives through scholarly contributions and presentations and through their efforts in building NACADA as a professional association. They have been leaders on their campuses in transforming academic advising from a transactional activity of course selection to one that changes the lives of students. It is important to note all leaders were from North America and speaking about academic advising from a North American perspective.

The study was carried out with approval from the Institutional Review Board of McGill's doctoral-granting institution. All participants gave their written informed consent to have their data included in this research. An interview protocol was designed to examine a variety of issues related to professionalizing the field of academic advising: the essence and distinctive nature of the field, the various roles performed by its practitioners, the career stages of advisors, the role of scholarly literature and graduate curricula, the perceptions of the field by other stakeholders, and future directions. The semi-structured interviews ranged from 74 to 147 min. The interviews were recorded on two devices and data were professionally transcribed and sent to participants to verify accuracy.

The interview transcripts were uploaded into NVivo, a computer qualitative analysis software program to assist with tracking the codes. Data were first approached with open coding and findings from thematic analyses produced articles (McGill, 2018; McGill, undereview). Once these data were organized by themes, participants were given the opportunity to confirm meaningfulness of the themes. For the current article, the dataset was approached using a deductive coding logic and directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In directed content analysis, a pre-determined framework is used to guide the research question, the coding scheme, as well as relationships between codes, categories, or themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This is a process of deductive category application in which researchers can "begin coding immediately with the predetermined codes" (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1282). To round out our categories, we furnished them with quotations adding nuanced meanings to the categories. In qualitative research, the findings depend on extensive and judicious use of quotations from participants.

The potential for validation of previous work is one of the strengths of directive qualitative content analysis. However, the researchers engaged in following measures of validity: researcher reflexivity and investigator triangulation (Patton, 2002). One important duty for a qualitative researcher is to locate themselves in the research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This participant-observation role affords opportunities but demands attending to the potential bias of the researcher (Yin, 2009). At the time of data collection, Craig was an academic advisor in the United States for 8 years and active member of NACADA leadership and therefore, it is impossible to remove himself from this professional context. Thus, many of the participants interviewed he knew well, and conversations about this topic have extended beyond the interviews themselves. As the primary instrument

(Merriam and Tisdell, 2015), the researcher takes themselves out of study as much as possible, setting aside pre-conceived ideas about the phenomenon "to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). This was only possible to a certain degree but remaining cautious of this helped him to manage his own subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988) and be alert for the potential for bias (Yin, 2009). To assist with the potential bias and more importantly, to offer a lens external to North American lens, authors two and three (representing different countries and continents), were brought in for their cultural context and insight. Mehvash works in an American curriculum institution, American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the United Arab Emirates. For two consecutive years AUS has topped the Times Higher Education (THE) list of universities with the highest percentage of international students globally. AUS boasts 84% of its student being international students representing 90 different countries. Advising at AUS is divided between academic units (majors/college) and an advising office. Dionne is an Educational Developer working in a Russell Group, research intensive United Kingdom university, the University of Birmingham, a focus of her role is to support staff to develop their expertise in personal tutoring. She is a doctoral researcher and her research is about supporting and developing staff who have a role as a personal tutor. Dionne also has a leadership role in UKAT. In working together, we participated in investigator triangulation (Patton, 2002), "the use of several different researchers or evaluators" (p. 247) and therefore, engaged in *collaboration* throughout the analysis of the data.

FINDINGS

Inspired by the discussion of core values and skills of the personal tutor (Lochtie et al., 2018), the data were re-examined for evidence of professional values, professional skills and behaviors, and training and continuing professional education. We present our findings accordingly.

Professional Values

A few participants described a professional "set of values." Participant 4 said, "*There are some habits of mind and heart that no matter how brilliant you are, you are not going to be a good advisor if you don't like students. Perhaps that should go without saying but perhaps it doesn't.*" Participant 6 described an activity he developed for on-boarding new academic advisors to help them determine and articulate their professional and personal values. He asked advisors what their work meant to them and what the goals and objectives of advising should be. After some rounds of collecting this data, he could begin to predict who would be a successful advisor "*based on the values they selected.*" He continued:

The values characterizing good advisors were: caring for students, a service-oriented ethic, a sense of initiative and a commitment to good work. These are descriptions of great employees anywhere, but what I've come to believe in advising it's the key. The skills can then be developed from there. And most people with that set of values have already developed interpersonal skills. Can they relate well to

students? Can they help students to work through the challenges they're facing? Can they coach them? Can they assist them? Can they design a process for working with their advisees that helps them to accomplish their goals? Interpersonal skills, and the ability to both design and engage in a process of advising. Have a plan, a sense of purpose, and a way of achieving it in working with students. (Participant 6)

Participants noted it was important for someone in an advising role to like college students, who enjoyed interacting with people and diverse populations. Much of this was described as traits an advisor had before arriving on the professional scene. Participant 12 noted:

...It's the personality of the person in the position that makes them a good advisor. You can have people with different majors, and one's a really good advisor and one's lousy. But it's because they care, want to help, and value student success.

One's "self-definition" is one's identity, how they view themselves, and how they live their professional lives. Participant 15 discussed the importance of self-awareness in one's work:

We have to know ourselves. We have to know who we are, what we are doing, why we are doing this to be effective in working with students. To make a more satisfying and fulfilling line of work is to keep that at the forefront of my mind.

Results indicated that key values that advising professionals should embody include caring for students, desire to work with diverse body of students, commitment to student success, and service orientation.

Professional Skills and Behaviors

Although much of the data spoke to the need to have values/attitudes that align with advising as opposed to a set of skills, there were some professional skills and behaviors mentioned. Effective academic advisors and personal tutors needed to possess patience and empathy, listening skills and the ability to oscillate from tiny details to the bigger picture. Participant 1 said:

A genuine human empathy for those who are seeking an education. And not everyone has that. People who value education self-select into advising for a reason. And there's a lot of interpersonal skills. . . active listening skills, the ability to perceive what is not being said, and ask questions that can make that be said. . . The ability to move from really big picture to ridiculous details. And back and forth, easily. And that's a pretty distinctive skill that not everybody has.

Good academic advisors and personal tutors also have an ability to understand and "read" people and have a tolerance for ambiguity, "knowing things are not all that simple" (Participant 5). Participants also noted it was important for academic advisors and personal tutors to have a willingness to collaborate with other campus units (e.g., department faculty, financial aid), and be able to prioritize tasks and switch gears when necessary.

To serve students in these ways, academic advisors must wear many hats, to be able to read and interpret students: both the

issues students are presenting *and* those that are beneath the surface. This process is an artform of integration:

The ability to integrate the theoretical understanding of what is happening, the conceptual and cognitive understanding of your job with the human interaction. It's simultaneously seeing the student in front of you, meeting them where they are, integrating your responsibility as a professional, and your institutional mission, to marshal these intangible intangibles. I operationalize that very practically, even though "artform" sounds like something that you can't define. Those are measurable competencies that are built over time. (Participant 9)

Academic advisors must be able to integrate many skills on the spot and have a broad and in-depth understanding of the campus and the curriculum of the institution:

...being able to understand complex knowledge and apply it to individual situations. That's critical because the amount of information is expected of advisors has grown exponentially since I started in this field. Because the requirements have expanded and technology has made it even more challenging. (Participant 13)

Skills and behaviors such as effective communication, empathy, understanding of curriculum, and collaborative efforts are key for advisors and personal tutors.

Training and Continuing Professional Education/Development

Since not everyone has experience/academic training in advising or advising-related areas, participants noted the need for solid training. Continued professional education (CPE) (continued professional development in the United Kingdom) was regularly considered an important part of the work of an academic advisor/personal tutor. For instance, Participant 8 described the concept of the knowledge workers, who "are lifelong informal learners and see growing themselves as something they not only need to do, but also as something they want to do, and part of their self-definition."

These skills and sets of knowledge that can be acquired in a number of ways. Specifically, the self-directed learning a professional needs to take on when they lack the education to practice advising. Participant 9 reflected:

It's possible to gain an understanding of the field through experience and then come to theory later. I had never taken a class in college student personnel, higher ed, student development theory; post-secondary theory, higher ed. anything. . . For the last 20 years, every single piece of anything I've ever written, my homework was building an understanding of the field from scratch. That's bringing a scholar's approach, not just being a learner.

Training and continued professional development of academic advisors or personal tutors is also important to improve the perception of academic advising/personal tutoring. This involves observing systematic issues and institutional processes. One participant suggested institutional approaches to training and professional development is the key issue to professionalizing the field. She argued:

You must be seen as skills and competencies you learn and build over time. If we transformed that practice and nothing else, we

would make significant progress. We would see significant changes in the field because hundreds of institutions would be asking, “what should the curriculum be? What should we be teaching?” And that’s a reflexive act that creates and recreates its own reality. (Participant 9)

Findings confirm the importance of continued professional development and training for advisors and personal tutors so they can be informed of international best practices and remain informed of institutional changes.

DISCUSSION

An important professional value consistent across the frameworks and evidenced within our findings is that a strong advising relationship involves communicating in a manner that values the diversity of student experiences and backgrounds. Advisors and personal tutors should nurture a relationship that respects and engages students’ varied perspectives and backgrounds. Focus on diversity allows advisors and personal tutors to address inequalities and barriers in higher education for a range of underrepresented and marginalized student groups (Selzer and Rouse, 2013). Institutional advising outcomes should be aligned with the changing needs of a diverse global community and social justice frameworks should be embedded in the practice of advising delivery (Rouse, 2011). Students’ diverse identities influence their educational experiences and impact the advising interactions.

Our data suggested that advising professionals should have the integrity to trust their colleagues and demonstrate genuine empathy and care for their students and their life experiences. Advising professionals must take care of the diverse student body that is going through new challenges in a hyper connected world and should be able to read students and their situations. This relates to NACADA’s value of professionalism that stresses the importance of advisors working toward the greater good of students, the value of caring that stresses the importance of nurturing and supporting students, the value of inclusivity that stresses openness, acceptance, and equity, and the value of empowerment that stresses recognition of student potential.

Our findings also illuminate aspects of the United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring [UKAT] (2020), the United Kingdom National Occupations Standards [NOS] (2020) and the core values and skills of the effective personal tutor (Lochtie et al., 2018). Participants described tutors/advisor having a set of professional values; the *professional* component in the UKAT Framework is about the commitment to professional values. The findings support the *professional* competencies that focus on the needs and perspectives of students and appreciate students’ views and cultures, maintaining a student-centered approach United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring [UKAT] (2020). There is evidence of caring for students, being committed to them and of valuing students. The core values (Lochtie et al., 2018) of being compassionate and valuing students as individuals are present in our findings. Professional values are about how tutors/advisors work together as identified in the National Occupations Standards [NOS] (2020) first standard, managing

relationships and also described by Lochtie et al. (2018) as “the equal partner, not superior” approach.

Academic advising and personal tutoring is, at its core, a relational process. The *Relational* component of NACADA’s core competencies (Farr and Cunningham, 2017) is a set of skills academic advisors and personal tutors must demonstrate and include (but are not limited to) the skill to create rapport and build a positive growth-oriented relationship with students, inclusive, effective, and respectful communication, and having successful advising interactions. A solid relationship between an academic advisor or personal tutor and a student forms the basis of all the interventions that may be applied in advising/tutoring. Although academic advisors and personal tutors are not mental health counselors, we can draw upon the psychology literature, which identifies empathy, goal consensus/collaboration, therapeutic alliance, and positive regard as factors leading to positive gains in a therapeutic environment when they are combined with empirically supported interventions (Laska et al., 2014). Since students need to feel comfortable going to their academic advisor or personal tutor (Yale, 2019), academic advisors and personal tutors should possess certain characteristics to facilitate relationships with students. Some of these characteristics are empathy, goal consensus, collaboration, alliance, and positive regard; these are more likely to see positive gains in the advising relationships (Ali, 2018). Academic advisors and personal tutors should embrace Rogers’ (1983) qualities of genuineness, trust, acceptance and empathetic understanding (Quinn, 1995). Academic advisors and personal tutors acting as an advocate, being empathetic, proactive, reliable, enthusiastic, having a good level of knowledge and seeming interested in the student, being supportive and non-judgmental are traits valued by students (Stephen et al., 2008; Thomas, 2012). Furthermore, knowing the student’s name and treating each student as a unique individual (Smith, 2008; Barker and Mamiseishvili, 2014; Ghenghesh, 2018) is significant to the relationship. Successful relationships transpire when students feel that their academic advisor or personal tutor genuinely cares for them and for their success. Therefore, establishing a positive and caring relationship by being approachable and accessible is important for academic advisors and personal tutors (Braine and Parnell, 2011).

Professional skills and behaviors are concerned with patience and empathy, listening skills and the ability to oscillate from tiny details to the bigger picture. The Gardner Institute’s Conditions of Excellence in Academic Advising (EAA) include effective communication, focus on student success, value of equity, inclusion, and diversity, advisor development and scholarship of advising. The *relational* component in the UKAT Framework aligns with skills that tutors need, this component is concerned with relationships, being empathetic and compassionate and communicating in an inclusive and respectful manner. Lochtie et al. (2018) list active listening, questioning, and building genuine rapport with students as fundamental skills. An additional skill highlighted is to be able to collaborate with colleagues across campus in various roles, which is identified in the *relational* component and the National Occupations Standards [NOS] (2020) standard ten – provide learner access to specialist support services. In this section there is a recognition of

the roles that a person may have in addition to the tutor/advisor role and that this requires problem solving, decision-making, meaning-making, planning, and goal setting which aligns with the *relational* component and the *professional* component and standard one of NOS – managing work demands. Our findings support these conditions for excellence and lend support that advisors and personal tutors should foster student success through empathy and effective communication skills that respect students' perspectives, experiences, and identities. Advisors and personal tutors should enjoy working with students and be committed to seeing their students advance. Additionally, advisors and personal tutors need to advance the field of academic advising through scholarly inquiry and should strive to be life-long learners by actively seeking out professional development opportunities.

As the NACADA Core Competencies provide some nuanced framework for the work roles of academic advisors and personal tutors, our data also illuminate aspects of the competencies. The *conceptual* competencies are concerned with concepts advisors must understand. Principally, our findings highlight the importance of the Core Values of academic advising. Participants spoke about the important “habits of mind and heart” to perform the work of advising and to care about the academic success of students. There was little evidence for *informational* competencies, which provide the substance for the work. This is perhaps because having institutional knowledge, knowledge about policies and procedures, about any legal regulations is assumed by most people to be part of the work of advising. Participant 9 did mention the necessity of being able to pull elements together in the moment when meeting with a student. But this deals not just with the *informational* competencies regarding the institution and curriculum, but also a consideration of that student (*conceptual* competencies) and what that student needs in that moment and how to deliver that information (*relational* competencies). The *relational* competencies provide the skills, what the advisor must have the ability to do. It is perhaps unsurprising, that evidence of these competencies were found throughout our data. For instance, in discussing what he was looking for in new advisors, Participant 6 discussed the importance of creating rapport and relationships with students, the ability to communicate respectfully, having the skills needed to plan and conduct successful advising interactions and to be able to help students work through issues. Many participants noted the importance of advisors and personal tutors possessing patience, empathy, listening skills and the ability to move from small details to the bigger picture. Finally, Participant 15 discussed the importance of self-reflection and advisors knowing themselves and being self-aware when working with students. Although articulating a personal philosophy of academic advising was not mentioned explicitly, all these other aspects of the *relational* component speak to the importance of having informed, nuanced, and respectful practice. Although we found the most evidence of *relational* competencies in our data, having skills, context, and substance in each area is important: “Without understanding (conceptual elements), there is no context for the delivery of services. Without information, there is no substance to advising. And, without personal skills

(relational), the quality of the advisee/advisor relationship is left to chance” (Habley, 1995, p. 76).

Advisors and personal tutors need continued training to remain current and knowledgeable about international best practices in the field of advising as well as the changing needs of students. NACADA's Core Value of Commitment stresses excellence through scholarly inquiry and life-long learning. Competencies of the UKAT Framework are concerned with tutors engaging with theory linked to advising and tutoring and continuing professional development and scholarly enquiry. Additionally, National Occupations Standards [NOS] (2020) standard two focuses on tutors developing their own tutoring practice. In many circumstances, academic advisors and personal tutors gain professional experience on their own, often utilizing professional development opportunities available through NACADA and other higher education professional associations. There are programs available in education but those are mostly geared toward primary, secondary, or special education. On the job training opportunities such as teaching or research assistants or other student worker/work study jobs that may expose individuals to student development theory are also not as prolific in the middle east as they are in the west. In response to this demonstrated need to equip academic advisors to work with a host of student issues, some institutions have developed robust training and professional development programs. An effective advisor-development program consists of three elements: the *audience* (type of advisor/advising situation), *content* (what should be included), and instructional or *delivery mode* of the program (the most appropriate way to engage the participants) (Nutt, 2003). “The program for faculty members may vary from that of one for full-time advisors. . . . The type of advisor may be a major consideration for the designer who is determining the content level, the delivery mode, format, and frequency of the training sessions” (Nutt, 2003, p. 11). In building advising training and development programs, there needs to be a concerted effort to add *relational* competencies to learning opportunities to practice skills and techniques (McGill et al., 2020). For example, through shadowing, the use of vignettes, role playing, clinical observation, and cognitive apprenticeships (Duslak and McGill, 2014), advisors can have the opportunity to bolster their relational skills and competencies.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary limitation of this study is that participants were all NACADA leaders from North America commenting about academic advising in a North American setting. Therefore, these perspectives are not representative of the feelings of the entire field. Future research might engage in similar questions with a larger pool and with participants who do not necessarily represent NACADA leadership. For example, examining the perspectives of people working in academic advisors or personal tutors around the world would reveal insight into the advising or tutoring role that may have not been discussed in the literature or from a non-North American perspective.

Questions about why academic advisors or personal tutors chose to enter the field and why they choose to stay could help to elucidate the meaning advisors and tutors give to their advising/tutoring work.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The dataset generated for this study will not be made publicly available due to the home institution's requirements and the agreement of the study participants. Therefore, the raw data used in this article is not available for distribution.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Florida International University IRB. The

patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CM collected the manuscript uses data and part of a larger project. MA and DB provided international perspectives and contributed to the manuscript report. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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