

Guest Editorial

The Academic Advising Issue

Gugu Wendy Tiroyaboneⁱ & François Strydomⁱⁱ

Academic advising is critical to improve student success and to advance social justice. International research indicates that academic advising is the “single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (Light, 2001) and that “every advising contact is a precious opportunity for a meaningful interaction with the student” (Kuh, 2008). Therefore, the section in this special edition of the *Journal for Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA)* on academic advising represents an important milestone for the development of academic advising as an emerging field in South Africa. The seven articles help to address the lack of South African research on academic advising and its impact. These articles share the reflections and research of deeply committed advisors that have been creating “precious opportunities” for thousands of students during their academic journey. The aim of this selection of papers is to advance scholarship in this emerging field in the South African context. The seven articles include five institutional case studies that provide insights into the impact of different institutional contexts on the development of advising. The last two articles pose broader conceptual questions on advising.

In the first article, Tiroyabone and Strydom introduce the development of academic advising in South Africa over the last decade and, more specifically, at the University of the Free State (UFS) which continues to play a leading role in the development of the field. Obaje and Jeawon offer a critical review of the development of an academic advising approach in the context of the Durban University of Technology. In their contribution on the *Conceptualisation and Early Implementation of an Academic Advising System at the University of Cape Town*, colleagues provide fascinating insights into the development of academic advising in highly decentralised institutions. Naidoo, Byles and Kwenaita at the University of Pretoria, emphasise the importance of social integration for first year students as part of a range of academic advising initiatives offered at this institution. The University of the Witwatersrand case study provides important insights into how

i **Gugu Wendy Tiroyabone** (corresponding author), Assistant Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning, tiroyabonegw@ufs.ac.za, University of the Free State, ORCID: 0000-0002-9478-2503

ii **François Strydom**, Senior Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning, strydomjf@ufs.ac.za, University of the Free State, ORCID: 0000-0002-4338-8127

emergency remote teaching during the Covid pandemic has affected advisor perception.

The two conceptual articles start with the article on *Merging Academic and Career Advising to Offer Holistic Student Support: A University Perspective*. In this paper Schoeman, Loots and Bezuidenhoud emphasise the intertwined nature of academic and career advising and how international frameworks can be adapted to the South African context. The final article by De Klerk uses Archer's Social Realism theoretical framework to scrutinise the complex nature of academic advisors.

All the articles illustrate how these scholars are grappling with the definition of academic advising and where and how it should be optimally positioned in institutions. Although the National Academic Advising Association preamble (NACADA, 2006), defines academic advising as a multidimensional and intentional process grounded in teaching and learning, international literature often positions academic advising as part of student affairs. Therefore, it is fitting that this selection of articles is published in the Journal for Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA) to stimulate conversations on how academic advising can develop in South Africa.

It is important to recognise that the development of academic advising would not have been possible without catalytic environments and sustainable support. An important catalytic environment has been Siyaphumelela (2021) which was generously funded by the Kresge Foundation. Vital sustainable support has been provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) which prioritised student (academic) advising as one of the pillars in the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG) and also approved collaborative grant funding to grow academic advising in South Africa.

We would like to thank the JSAA editorial team for enabling the creation of this platform to share these seven articles. These are the first of many reflective practitioners and scholars who will share the impact and potential of academic advising in creating more equitable institutional environments that enable student success.

References

- Kuh, G. D. (2008). Advising for student success. In V.N. Gordon, W.R. Habley, & T.J. Grites (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (2nd ed.) (pp. 68–83). Jossey-Bass.
- Light, R. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Harvard University Press.
- Siyaphumelela: *A student success initiative*. <https://siyaphumelela.org.za/>