

Undergraduate academic advising is a component of teaching for many faculty in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Additionally, advising is a very important component of the college experience for CAFNR students.

In the Spring of 2008, a study was conducted to assess the importance of selected academic advising characteristics and faculty performance toward these characteristics, as perceived by CAFNR undergraduate students. In addition, the study sought to identify factors that influence students' academic advising needs and satisfaction. All CAFNR undergraduate students (N = 1619) enrolled during the Spring 2008 semester were invited to participate in this study.

An online instrument distributed via email to currently enrolled students consisted of 34 academic advising items based upon four advising constructs. A total of 726 students completed the instrument for a 45% response rate.

While college-wide results are interesting and beneficial in determining areas for enhancement, departmental reports are even more helpful for CAFNR divisions and departments hoping to effectively meet the needs of their students. The following report contains information gleaned from the study specific to Agricultural Education majors.

According to CAFNR's Academic Programs Office records, a total of 71 undergraduate students were enrolled in Agricultural Education during the Spring semester. Sixty-seven students completed the instrument, yielding a 94% response rate. Demographics for the respondents are included in Table 1.

Table 1. *Student Demographics (n = 67)*

Characteristic	f	%
Sex		
Female	52	77.61
Male	15	22.39
Academic Level		
Freshman	8	11.94
Sophomore	22	32.84
Junior	19	28.36
Senior	18	26.86

## Findings

- Email and face-to-face meetings were the only methods Ag Ed students used to communicate with their faculty advisors. Nearly three-fourths (70.2%) of students indicated face-to-face was their primary method, while 29.9% preferred email.
- Over 95% of students reported meeting with their faculty advisor at least twice in the past year. Over 76% indicated meeting with their advisor three or more times during the year. Students overwhelmingly reported (85%) that the number of advising meetings was sufficient in meeting their needs.
- A majority indicated that advising appointments generally lasted 6 to 15 minutes.
- In addition to their faculty advisor, students indicated that peers (33%), another faculty member (21%), and electronic resources (10%) were their primary sources of information.
- Students indicated that it was most important for advisors to be available and accessible, and personable and approachable (see Table 2) though all advising constructs yielded mean scores exceeding 4.00.

Table 2. *Importance to Students and Performance of Faculty on Advising Constructs (n = 67)*

Advising Construct	Importance		Performance	
	M	SD	M	SD
Availability/Accessibility	4.59	.35	4.64	.50
Personable/Approachable	4.51	.42	4.50	.62
Counseling/Mentoring	4.29	.38	4.07	.82
Knowledge/Helpfulness	4.15	.34	3.95	.71

- Overall, faculty advisors' performance was rated good to excellent. Performance within the available and accessible construct was the highest, with ratings exceeding 4.5 on a 5.0 scale (see Table 3).
- The largest discrepancies (MWDS) between items of importance and faculty performance were on items relating to employment opportunities, both during and after college, obtaining financial assistance, and career exploration (see Table 3).

Table 3. Importance, Advisors' Performance, and Mean Weighted Discrepancy Scores of Advising Characteristics (n = 67)

Academic Advising Construct	Importance		Performance		MWDS
	M	SD	M	SD	
<b>Availability/Accessibility</b>					
Available when I need assistance	4.76	.46	4.57	.78	0.92
Responds to my requests in a timely fashion (email, phone calls)	4.67	.47	4.58	.68	0.76
Maintains an open line of communication	4.67	.53	4.61	.65	0.28
Provides sufficient time for advising appointments	4.54	.53	4.66	.85	-0.54
On time for advising appointments/meetings with me	4.64	.64	4.82	.42	-0.83
Provides an effective process for scheduling advising appointments	4.24	.70	4.54	.77	-1.27
<b>Knowledge/Helpfulness</b>					
Assists in identifying potential areas of employment after college	4.60	.49	4.00	1.06	4.12
Provides information about obtaining financial assistance	4.33	.77	3.48	1.11	3.88
Helps obtain employment on campus	3.54	1.17	3.24	1.23	3.11
Provides information about educational opportunities beyond B.S. degree	4.25	.70	3.82	1.16	2.34
Helps clarify life goals	4.36	.64	3.82	1.10	2.34
Communicates degree requirements	4.73	.59	4.32	1.01	2.26
Knowledgeable about general education courses	4.52	.64	4.03	1.21	2.22
Assists in selecting/changing my academic majors	3.93	1.28	4.07	1.01	2.05
Aware of my academic progress	4.54	.61	4.21	.81	1.49
Provides information about using myZou	3.63	.94	3.55	1.17	1.25
Provides information regarding study skills	3.31	.94	3.23	1.26	0.75
Encourages academic success	4.79	.45	4.64	.67	0.72
Suggests academic resources	3.31	.96	3.39	1.19	0.24
Encourages involvement in co-curricular student activities	4.21	.96	4.36	1.06	-0.63
<b>Personable/Approachable</b>					
Respects my decisions	4.67	.50	4.38	.76	1.95
Familiar with my academic background	4.37	.65	4.00	1.04	1.63
Easy to talk with	4.70	.52	4.48	.99	1.05
Provides a caring, open atmosphere	4.63	.57	4.57	.82	0.28
Seems to enjoy advising	4.48	.70	4.69	.70	-0.94
Acknowledges me in social settings	4.24	.78	4.61	.87	-1.58
<b>Counseling/Mentoring</b>					
Encourages me to explore career areas of interest	4.36	.62	3.78	1.18	2.99
Suggests strategies to cope with academic challenges	4.19	.72	3.80	1.06	2.38
Helps select courses that match my interests	4.69	.47	4.21	1.18	2.24
Helps me identify obstacles to overcome to reach my educational goals	4.25	.70	3.85	1.06	2.22
Stimulates my interest in an academic discipline	4.30	.65	4.12	.95	1.03
Expresses concern for my personal development	4.43	.63	4.31	1.00	0.53
Encourages me to assume an active role in planning my degree	4.48	.64	4.47	.92	0.33
Willing to discuss personal problems	3.64	1.14	4.11	.91	-0.58

Note. Importance Scale: 1.00 – 1.50 = Not Important, 1.51 – 2.50 = Of Little Importance, 2.51 – 3.50 = Somewhat Important, 3.51 – 4.50 = Important, 4.51 – 5.00 = Very Important

Performance Scale: 1.00 – 1.50 = Poor, 1.51 – 2.50 = Fair, 2.51 – 3.50 = Satisfactory, 3.51 – 4.50 = Good, 4.51 – 5.00 = Excellent

Smith, A. R. (2008). *Academic advising in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources: An investigation of students' needs and faculty performance*. Department of Agricultural Education, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO. Available online at <http://edt.missouri.edu/Spring2008/Dissertation/MounceSmithA-050708-D9766/research.pdf>