

From Transactional to Transformational Referrals: Equipping Advisors and Students for Success

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Overview

As front-line support for students, advisors are often the first to know the challenges students are experiencing and see firsthand how those challenges and lack of adequate basic needs impact students' academic success. Impacts of the global pandemic and social, political, and economic climates of the past several years have only increased student challenges and needs and have disproportionately impacted communities of color, first generation students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and other underrepresented populations. While advisors should not be expected (nor are equipped) to solve every problem or crisis, they are in a unique position to provide appropriate referrals to other resources. To provide effective referrals, we must move beyond transactional referrals (providing information) to transformational referrals - where students learn what resources are available and how to advocate for themselves to get what they need from those resources.

While articles and resources about making effective referrals exist (Refuss & Mentzer, 2006; Roundy, 1992), there is a gap in current literature on what effective help-seeking conversations look like, the systematic and individual barriers that exist to students seeking help, and strategies for preparing students to get what they need from those resources. This webinar will fill this gap by discussing how to use relational and transformational advising approaches to support students, particularly those from underrepresented communities, in identifying challenges and needs and building self-advocacy skills to seek out resources. Participants will engage in critical conversations about common barriers to help-seeking behaviors and see examples for enhancing referral practices. Participants will also leave with strategies for transforming help-seeking mindsets and implementing effective referral practices in their day-to-day student interactions.

What You'll Learn (Learning Objectives)

- 1) Identify and address personal and systematic barriers regarding student needs and helping seeking behaviors, particularly students from underrepresented groups or first generation college students.
- 2) Understand relational and transformational advising approaches to support students in identifying challenges and needs and building self-advocacy skills to seek out resources.
- 3) Reflect on current referral practices and implement strategies for relationship building and transformational approaches.

Pre-Webinar Reading/Activity Suggestions

This webinar will include portions for personal and self-reflection. We encourage you to come to the webinar prepared to take notes and engage in personal reflection when prompted.

Post-Webinar Activity Suggestions

The suggested activities give instructions are for facilitating a group discussion, but they can be done individually. Reflect and write your responses to the prompts. Then, use your reflections to develop ideas for how to adapt your advising practices. You may want to share your ideas with colleagues (or even develop a conference proposal)!

Activity and Discussions: Help-seeking Perceptions.

1. In a group setting, have each person respond to the following questions (or reflect on the answers yourself). You can use a polling software to collect responses or have participants write their responses on sticky notes and then post them on a common poster/board.
 - Think about a time (or times) you needed to ask for help. How did that feel?
 - How about a time (or times) when you offered to help someone? How did that feel?
2. After asking participants to respond to each question, look at the common responses to each questions. Discuss the following questions?
 - What are some things we have in common about help seeking and giving?
 - What are the differences across experiences that make us unique?
 - Compare the words, themes, or emotions used to describe asking for help versus offering help. Were they similar or different?
3. After comparing/contrasting the responses, watch (or rewatch) this video “Are you Judging Those Who Ask for Help” from Brene Brown and Oprah Winfrey network: <https://youtu.be/lud89Gi8Jgs?si=sWqZNmPkpEkc0Hg>.
 - As a group, discuss your thoughts from the video.
 - How do your perceptions on help seeking/giving impact your conversations with students on help-seeking?
 - What perceptions do you think your students have on help seeking?
 - How can understanding your perspectives on help-seeking help you better serve students?
 - What changes can you make to your advising practices to have more productive help-seeking conversations?

Discussion: Understanding Your Student Needs and Barriers to Help Seeking

1. Meet as a department and/or college and have discussions around the types of students you serve.
 - What are their financial needs? Demographics? Other demands they are facing? Do you know what these needs/demographics are?
2. After reviewing your student populations, have discussions around the unseen barriers to help-seeking covered in the webinar (slide 8).
 - Do you see these barriers impacting your students?
 - Are there others unique to your student populations that were not covered in the webinar?
3. After reviewing student barriers to help-seeking, discuss how help seeking is currently viewed or discussed in your department.
 - What are shared view points on help-seeking and student needs?
 - What are commonly held perceptions or misconceptions on the ability of students to succeed?
 - Are you aware of resources to assist students? Do you have relationships with those departments?
 - Are you actively sharing resources? What formats are you using to share information? (e.g. presentations, course syllabi, one-on-one advising appointments, etc.)?

As you continue these discussions, consider what action you can take to develop transformational referrals.

- What collective strategies can you take to reduce or address barriers to help-seeking behaviors?
- What has worked well for your students that wasn't covered in the webinar? What gaps are we still missing? (Consider submitting these ideas as future conference proposals or articles!)

Recommended Readings

The following books are recommended as individual or group readings to further explore and learn about the topics covered in the webinar:

- *Daring Greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent and lead*, Brené Brown
- *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let go of who you think you're supposed to be and embrace who you are*, Brené Brown
- *Relationship Rich Education: How human connections drive success in college*, Peter Felten and Leo M. Lambert

Example Resources/Tools

- **New Student Intake Form:** <https://beav.es/c3b>. Includes optional questions to survey students about their needs and areas of concern when entering the major.
- **College of Education Quick Resource Guide:** <https://beav.es/Tuy>. Given to all new students at orientation and displayed in advising offices to normalize access to/need for using other campus resources.

References

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