

A Design Thinking approach to develop Inclusive Advising

Dr. Tanuj Singh and Dr. Joseph Croskey

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to understand advising utilizing design thinking approach to develop 'inclusive' advising. Steps of design thinking will help in understanding the challenges and developing solutions to overcome them. This study will provide a framework for enhancing students experiences via advising. The conceptual framework from this paper will help in understanding current advising scenario and how to identify critical issues and develop workable solutions for inclusive environment for the students.

Key Words:

Advising, Academic Advising, Inclusive Advising, Design Thinking

Introduction:

Design thinking is a problem-solving approach that gained popularity in various fields (Almaghaslah, 2021). Design thinking is defined as "a systematic approach that prioritizes deep empathy for users' desires, needs and challenges to fully understand a problem, with the aim of developing more comprehensive and effective solutions" (Almaghaslah, 2021). It was also explained as a human-centered innovation process that emphasizes observation, collaboration, fast learning, visualization of ideas, rapid concept prototyping and concurrent business analysis (Dunne, 2018). Design thinking comprises five stages: empathizing, defining, ideating, prototypes and testing (Almaghaslah, 2021). Design thinking has been using in some field such as engineering and architecture and now in Education. The first stage of design thinking. Literature indicated that academics have shown interest in embedding this approach in various educational settings (Panke, 2019). Incorporation of the design thinking process in different educational environments resulted in specific advantages, including: implicating tactical experiences, enhancing empathy, limiting cognitive bias, encouraging playful leaning, enhancing motivation and concentration, creating resilience, producing creative and innovative solutions and fostering creative confidence (Panke, 2019) Academic advising was defined as "the engagement of students to advance their educational experiences, and referring to the individual involved in this interaction with students as academic advisor" (Kuhn & Padak, 2008). Student advising on curricular and extra-curricular opportunities has been recognized as an essential element in producing skillful, confident, and critically thinking students who are ready to join the job market (Mann, 2020).

Academic Advising: Traditional Approaches

Traditional Academic Advising is a process in which a faculty or staff member is paired with a college student to assist, support, empower, and mentor a student through in person (face-to-face) communication and interactions to help an advisee develop and achieve professional, personal, interpersonal, career, and academic success through a guided relationship. (Golubski, 2012) Developmental advising is a type of advising that focuses on developing problem-solving and decision-making skills. It also focuses on helping students explore and define life goals. It does this through collaborative and process-oriented advising. (Crookston, 2009) Prescriptive

advising is focused on giving students the knowledge that is connected to their academic progress, like major requirements, course selection etc. Prescriptive advising is usually started by the student because the end result is for the student to get answers for the students' academic progress. (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001) Intrusive advising focuses on building relationships with students before there are problems so if they have any problems, they can seek advice from you. Intrusive advising is usually initiated by the advisor. (Farabaugh & Belback, n.d.)

Inclusive Advising

Inclusive advising is a framework to working with students of different races and cultures. Academic advisors play a vital role in ensuring the academic success and overall well-being of their students (Drake 2011). Academic advisors who know how to work with different cultures and races are a big resource for students of color. How these advisors work with the students can impact their view of the college environment. In a study done by Museus and Ravello (2010), 45 individuals – 14 academic advisors and 31 students of color across three institutions were interviewed. Based on the interviews three specific characteristics of academic advising that the participants felt were most significant to the success of students of color at predominantly white institutions. The three characteristics found effective were: humanistic, multifaceted, and proactive advising.

Humanistic advising: A humanistic approach to advising is made up of two ideologies, advisors are seen as human beings by the students they were advising, and these advisors are dedicated to their students' success and well-being. Advisors who use a humanistic approach to advising are seen as helpful, caring, and accessible (Museus & Ravello, 2010).

Multifaceted advising: Multifaceted academic advising means that academic advisors need to be aware of the various challenges and complex dynamics experienced by their students of color (Carnaje, 2016). Advisors who use multifaceted academic advising make sure that their students received the academic, financial, social, or personal support they need (Carnaje, 2016).

Proactive or Intrusive advising: In proactive or intrusive advising, the advisor needs to take charge and check in constantly with their students of color on topics such as retention, academic completion, and graduation rates (Museus & Ravello, 2010).

Understanding Advising using Design Thinking approach

It is important to look at the advising process that is implemented at Clarion University for ACT 101 students from 'Design Thinking' perspective. Because it will help in understanding what worked and how can it be improved further. ACT 101 advising is unique in many ways as it deals with students from families who are poor and situations with few academic resources. Often in addition to the rural population, this includes people from urban areas as well as a diverse student population, especially people of color. Thus, it is important to assess the process and help improve it to make it more inclusive and provide the students with a sense of belonging.

Empathy: This stage of design thinking is all about exploring students' perspectives and pain points about them (how they feel about academic and campus life). These are some of the following ways that ACT 101 team/success coach used to empathize with the students enrolled

in this program: 1) Held regular individual meetings, 2) Tracking their academic records and progress, 3) Getting development plans filled out by students every semester, and 4) monthly meetings in groups.

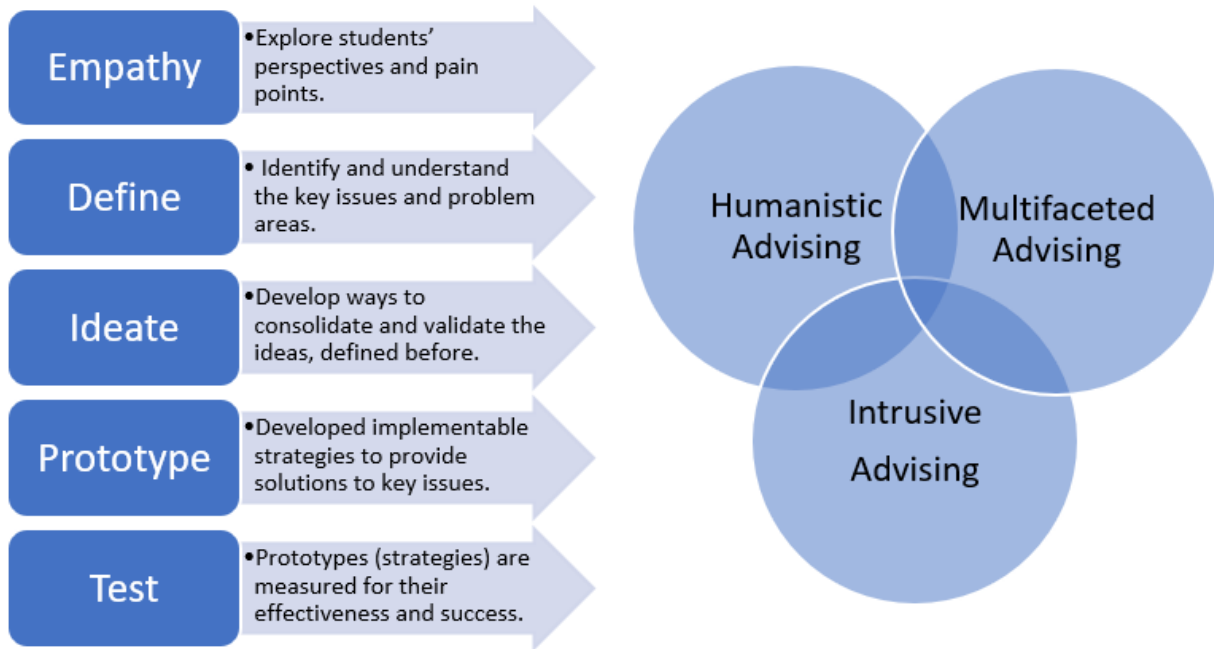
Define: In this stage of design thinking key issues and problem areas are to be identified and understood. For this purpose, ACT 101 team/success coach collectively discuss the different perspectives gathered from students from all the four ways mentioned in empathy stage. This helps in understanding the key issues among students. Some of the key issues identified are as follows: 1) non-inclusive environment (lack of social life) for diverse group of students, 2) limited awareness of university resources, 3) work-family life imbalance, and 4) unawareness about effective learning strategies.

Ideate: In this stage of design thinking the key issues identified in define stage are used for developing ways to consolidate and validate the ideas. It can be done by developing instruments to collect student data for final testing and validation. For this purpose, ACT 101 team/success coach collectively brainstorm the issues with senior members of the school and experts in the advising area. Some of the key findings from the ideation stage are as follows: 1) Provide learning strategies with the help of workshop and training, 2) Develop peer academic advising group, 3) Motivational training to overcome challenges, and 4) Mental health counselling.

Prototype: In this stage of design thinking the key ideas from ideation stage are developed into implementable strategies to provide solutions for the key issues. For this purpose, ACT 101 team/success coach developed solution strategies to test the key ideas. Some of the prototypes developed and implemented include: 1) student engagement strategies such as Bingo, 2) Expert sessions on career planning, 3) regular emails with flyers to create awareness about rules and regulations, 4) interactive sessions such as First Friday for experience and queries.

Test: In this stage of design thinking the prototypes are measured for their effectiveness. ACT 101 team/success coach found that their strategies worked to help engage students to certain extent. Though it was observed that more such activities are required to achieve the desired solutions for the key issues such as creating inclusive environment on campus for diverse students. Most of the prototypes were found effective in engaging students such as 1) Engagement strategies such as Bingo, 2) Expert sessions on career planning, 3) Regular emails with flyers to create awareness about rules and regulations, 4) Interactive sessions such as First Friday for experiences and queries.

Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Advising



Conclusion

From the above discussion on ACT101 advising at Clarion university, it is evident that while ACT101 is successful in engaging students, the process can be further improved to make the advising inclusive. Especially because there is lot of diversity among Clarion students represent many different races, religion, and ethnicities. Inclusive advising is more efficient if an institution develops a holistic approach towards advising including humanistic, multifaceted, and proactive approaches to advising. ACT 101 team/success coach utilized humanistic advising approach by providing caring and accessible help to their students. Success coaches became the students' friends/mentors and made their college experience better, as evidenced by students' feedback and behavior. Students were provided with financial, academic, social, or personal support they needed as per their requirement. Thus, holistic or the multifaceted advising approach was very helpful to all students especially students of color who had various challenges and complex dynamics. Students were reminded on a continuous basis about their academic progress, financial and academic resources, and to participate in a variety of student club activities for graduation rates, retention, and academic completion. So, they can graduate on time, academic progress on track, and retain them. This approach was especially helpful for students of color because though it was intrusive, it helped them in multiple ways being at a personal level based on understanding of their culture, customs, religion, communication/ language issues. Overall, this inclusive approach towards advising was led to better relationships with students and helping them with an inclusive environment on university campus.

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