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# Student Appraisal of Decentralized Advisement and Centralized Advisement

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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Author

STUDENT APPRAISAL OF DECENTRALIZED ADVISEMENT

and

CENTRALIZED ADVISEMENT

(TITLE)

BY

DALE HENRY KUNTZMAN

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

SPECIALIST IN EDUCATION

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1974

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

STUDENT APPRAISAL OF DECENTRALIZED ADVISEMENT  
(Faculty Adviser)

and

CENTRALIZED ADVISEMENT  
(Advisement Counselor)

BY

DALE HENRY KUNTZMAN

B. S. in Ed., Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1960  
M. S. in Ed., Wayne State University, 1968

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS  
1974

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The purpose of this pilot study of student appraisal of academic advisement is three-fold:

1) to evaluate the existing quality of the faculty adviser in contrast to advisement counselor at the college level.

2) to evaluate student perceptions of both forms of advisement.

3) to compare student appraisal of those exposed to centralized advisement with those exposed only to decentralized advisement in order to answer the basic question--which form of advisement is most effective.

This study is considering only two official forms of advisement--the faculty adviser (decentralized) who is full time on the teaching faculty and who advises students in addition to his teaching load, and the advisement counselor (centralized) who is hired by the university to function as a full time academic adviser or counselor. All (one hundred percent) of the advisement counselors in this study have been trained in counseling, the minimum requirement being an M.A. in Guidance and Counseling, with

some practical experience in the field of guidance and counseling in an institution. On the other hand, the faculty advisers, as far as one can determine, were trained primarily in their specialized fields and were not exposed extensively to any training in guidance and counseling or advisement techniques.

The student population for this study is students or ex-students from Eastern Illinois University and Elmira College. These two institutions were selected because of their contrasting advisement programs for their students. The total population consists of three comparable groups which are identified in the study as:

a) Group 1--this group consists of students assigned to the advisement center at Eastern Illinois University (1971-72) and who were exposed only to centralized advisement.

b) Group 2--this group was made up of ex-students of Eastern Illinois University who were pre-centralized advisement and who were exposed only to decentralized advisement or transfer students who were exposed only to decentralized advisement. These students attended Eastern Illinois University prior to the time the advisement center was in operation (1963-65).

c) Group 3--this group was composed of students from Elmira College (1972-73) who were exposed only to decentralized advisement.

When a student enters Eastern Illinois University as a freshman, he is presently assigned to an advisement counselor for at least the period of one year and in five areas for the period of two years. These five areas are: business, English, math, social science, and zoology. This group is referred to above as group 1.

The third group (group 3) is similar to group 2 in that, as mentioned above, they have been only exposed to faculty advisement and have not been exposed to professional advisement counselors.

This study, then, provides an evaluation of two approaches to academic advising currently in use at colleges and universities similar to the two institutions represented in this study. This study might also suggest other dimensions for consideration by raising some important institutional questions regarding advisement, such as:

- 1) How should an institution handle the academic advising of freshmen and upperclassmen?
- 2) What kind of course-planning assistance and academic orientation should be provided for beginning freshmen, upper classmen, and transfer students?
- 3) What should be done with non-preference or undecided students?
- 4) How effective is your present system of advisement?
- 5) Are you meeting the needs of your student body regarding academic advisement?



## CHAPTER II

### Hypothesis

In order to make the study more meaningful in terms of its purposes and in terms of the above questions and to give more perspective to the study, it might be advantageous to examine more fully the pros and cons of centralized and decentralized advisement from which the hypothesis was advanced.

The centralized advising program (as it operates at Eastern Illinois University, 1972) is characterized by: 1) a central office whose main responsibility is the academic (curricular) and some vocational advising of undergraduate freshmen and some sophomore students; 2) a full time professional staff of specialists who are aware of the academic and vocational needs of students; 3) a coordinator or director who is responsible for collecting and disseminating advising information for all the institutional programs and maintaining liaison with other appropriate administrative units within the university. Ideally, such advising systems assist undergraduates with all facets of their programs. The students are usually assigned to an adviser in the advisement center and are required to visit their adviser at least once a quarter before they are sent out to their departmental advisers at

the end of their first or second year, depending on their field of interest as mentioned earlier.

The advantages and disadvantages of both the centralized and decentralized advisement are discussed in several prominent studies\* which will be reviewed in the chapter on related research. It might be useful at this point to examine a few of the salient points brought out by these studies and elaborate some on them. In effect, the authors have stated that centralized advisement offers several attractive advantages. The most important of these are listed below:

1. Advising in university or educational setting should be full time professional activity. The advisers should be interested in young people and consider their work an important contribution rather than a necessary evil. Such interest in young people and devotion of time to advisement should result in a higher quality of advisement than could otherwise be obtained.
2. Advisers have no departmental affiliation and, therefore, no vested interests. Furthermore, one adviser is capable of discussing several different curricular options with students, thereby making it much more convenient for students to obtain information. Instead of having to seek out several different offices, a student need only visit one.
3. Such advisers provide more accurate and reliable information for students and are aware of the on-going changes in requirements

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\*Research by Breed, Sterling of Western Michigan University; Sheffield, Long Island University; Ravekes, Dundalk Community College; Rossmann, Jack Manchester College.

at a given institution. Most institutions are constantly revising courses, adding new ones, deleting others, modifying curricular and general requirements, and approving alternative courses to satisfy requirements. The quantity of such changes causes an adviser's work to resemble that of a tax expert at times. The centralized adviser makes every effort to keep up with the latest changes which would affect those students for whom he is responsible. Accuracy is vital since faulty advising usually costs a student money, time and energy.

4. The responsibility for advising is fixed in a centralized system.
5. Advising procedures are more uniform and there is greater continuity of advisement and more personalized service.
6. Finally, it must be noted that centralized advising has been enthusiastically endorsed by those institutions that have tried it, and other institutions have considered it as a possible solution to their problems.

There seem to be four principal disadvantages inherent in centralized advising systems.

1. First, and foremost, is the cost of maintaining a separate office of advisers in sufficient number to adequately handle the responsibilities involved. Yet it should be noted that whereas this cost is direct and obvious, the cost of a decentralized system is usually hidden in the form of released time for faculty advisers.
2. Also important is the fact that centralized advising

diminishes the contact that faculty members have with students. Thus, faculty are much less aware of student needs, problems, and demand for various courses. The advising relationship can provide much useful information for the faculty, and certainly it causes them to be more aware of the impact on students that changes in requirements can have.

3. Another difficulty in centralized advising is where to place the office in the administrative structure, and where to find the necessary staff. This, too, points out another related problem as to what qualifications the advisers should have. It seems that in some cases, particularly at Eastern Illinois University with which the researcher is familiar, some advisers have educational backgrounds too extensive for the task.

4. Finally, it is difficult in most cases for universities to maintain a proper adviser-student ratio. Too often the advising function is placed at the bottom of an institution's priorities. According to Lewis B. Mayhew, "Adequate counseling or advising of students is an expensive undertaking, but it is one which students say they want and need. Relatively few institutions have been willing to rearrange the deployment of their resources to provide this effective service."<sup>1</sup>

The most common form of academic advising is, by far, the decentralized form. The premise that teaching faculty

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis B. Mayhew, Colleges Today and Tomorrow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1969), p. 101.

should provide academic advice and guidance for their students has been traditional in institutions of higher learning. Furthermore, such a setup or system can usually be adapted to fit the administrative structure of either a small college or a large university.

Although the decentralized system may assume many different forms, it is usually distinguished by the fact that students are assigned to a specific faculty adviser in their major area of interest. In larger institutions such an assignment is not made until the student enters the junior year. During the first two undergraduate years, in this arrangement, students are advised by whichever administrative unit is responsible for the general educational program. Non-preference or undecided students may be assigned an adviser in the general education program, the Counseling Center, or some other academic department. Ideally, the student's adviser provides curricular advice as well as major-minor assistance. In large universities the system is most apt to be organized around the various colleges. Each college may have an assistant dean responsible for coordinating advising efforts within that particular college, disseminating information, and perhaps providing in-service training for advisers. Usually the overall coordination in such a system is provided by an individual reporting directly to the academic vice president or provost.

There are several advantages and disadvantages in

decentralized advising which should be considered at this point to give a greater perspective or some contrast with the advantages and disadvantages of centralized advising. First, let us consider some of the advantages in decentralized advising.

1. Perhaps the most important advantage is that it provides faculty members and students with an opportunity to relate outside the classroom. And since the adviser usually is drawn from the student's major field, the two are linked by common interest. Ideally the student receives interested and knowledgeable guidance, and the faculty member is provided with an opportunity to know students, their problems, and their concerns. Thus both parties in the relationship should benefit.

2. Decentralized advising is, in the opinion of some university officials and teachers, at least at Eastern Illinois University, more economical. The cost of such a system is indirect compared to a centralized program, and although it is commonly thought to be less expensive than the latter, this is not always true. In cases where faculty members are given reduced teaching loads for advising responsibilities the system may cost considerably more.

3. Such a system is flexible enough to fit into any organizational scheme and can accommodate the needs of an institution that is growing in size and complexity. In this sense the decentralized system has an advantage over the centralized program.

4. The decentralized system fits easily into the structure of most institutions since it is usually organized on the basis of

the various departments and colleges.

There are, however, some serious limitations that are often found in decentralized advising programs. Some of the important limitations are:

1. Probably the greatest difficulty in decentralized advising is finding teaching faculty who are genuinely interested in serving as advisers and who are knowledgeable enough about university programs to provide competent, accurate advice. Faculty members often seem to regard advising as an unpleasant job to be done as quickly as possible. Furthermore, many institutions tend to assign advising roles to their newest and least experienced faculty. Consequently, students report a lack of confidence in their advisers, and usually turn elsewhere for help.
2. Departmental advisers often are ignorant of academic matters outside their own departments. The student interested in comparing different curricula, major-minor possibilities, and/or vocational opportunities usually finds that the departmental adviser is unable to provide much help.
3. A decentralized system cannot easily accommodate the "undecided" student. Since a significant percentage of students entering college falls into the "undecided" category, this is a major problem. A recent study by Arthur Snider,<sup>2</sup> at Eastern Illinois University, indicated that 19.2 percent of the incoming freshmen for the fall quarter of 1971 were

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<sup>2</sup>Arthur Snider, unpublished research, Eastern Illinois University, 1971.

undecided as to the field in which they wanted to major. Mr. Snider's study further showed that 43 percent of the 1,482 freshmen changed majors during the first two quarters of that year. Since this is a problem, some institutions arbitrarily assign "undecided" students to departmental advisers; other schools attempt to solve the problem by placing all freshmen and sophomores in a basic studies unit (i.e., University College, General Studies, etc.). This method, however, does not seem to be a satisfactory solution to the problem.

4. Coordination is more difficult in a decentralized system. It is more of a problem to disseminate information, and to provide any kind of in-service training program for advisers. An attempt to provide an in-service training program at Eastern Illinois University in 1971 virtually failed because very few faculty advisers showed up for the program.

5. The decentralized system tends to be impersonal. If there is much turnover in faculty, there is little continuity in the advising relationship. Furthermore, in many systems the adviser-advisee ratio may vary widely, and create morale problems among faculty members.

If nothing else, the foregoing points should point out one important fact regarding academic advising; that is, a perfect or utopian advising system still remains to be discovered, much less implemented. Although, it is not within the scope of this pilot research project to suggest new and innovative ways of setting up an advisement system, it is,



however, an attempt to obtain from the students, the recipients of advisement, a complete appraisal of advisement and as a result of their appraisal to show by their assessment which form of advisement is most positively accepted by students. The primary or null hypothesis, then, for this pilot study is that there will be no significant difference between student appraisal, that is, high and low ranking, of centralized and decentralized advisement. The research hypothesis is that if a significant difference between the two forms of advisement does appear, that centralized advisement (professional advisers) would be more positively accepted by students than decentralized or faculty advisement.

## CHAPTER III

### Related Research

Two studies which reveal the importance of some form of advisement and success are:

First, Morehead and Johnson<sup>3</sup> used the control group technique in attempting to assess the impact of spending additional advising time with college freshmen. Their experimental group consisted of 48 male freshmen majoring in electrical engineering at North Carolina State College in the fall of 1960. The remaining 178 freshmen engineers made up the control group.

Students in the control group received routine advising from faculty members while the experimental group students had, in addition to the usual faculty advising relationship, two scheduled individual conferences each semester of their freshman year. The conferences dealt with college regulations, class participation, study schedule, and efficient study habits. Results indicated that the experimental group had a significantly higher freshman grade point average than the control group, but there were no differences between the two groups on rate of

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<sup>3</sup>C. C. Morehead and J. C. Johnson, "Some Effects of a Faculty Advising Program," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43, 1964, pp. 139-144.

retention.

The second of these studies was conducted by W. F. Brown.<sup>4</sup> In Mr. Brown's study, he used upperclassmen to conduct a program of academic advising, matched two groups of freshmen on the basis of sex, scholastic ability, and study orientation. One group received three sessions of advising by trained upperclassmen, while the other group had no advising. The advised group earned significantly higher grades at the end of the first semester and obtained higher scores on two measures of effective study habits.

As stated above, the studies of Mr. Morehead and Mr. Brown establish that proper advisement can be a positive and effective force in the adjustment of students to a college program--an important presupposition for this paper. Accepting the position that advisement is a positive and effective means of helping students, it is, then, the intent of the research to go beyond this and to show whether faculty advisement or professional advisement is the most effective and positively accepted by students.

Mr. J. E. Rossmann,<sup>5</sup> in a study at Macalester College, found that in giving faculty members released time to devote to academic advisement was not the answer to good advisement. Mr. Rossmann selected a group of 120 (experimental group) freshmen

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<sup>4</sup>W. F. Brown, "Student to Student Counseling for Academic Adjustment," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43, 1965, pp. 811-817.

<sup>5</sup>J. E. Rossmann, "Released Time for Faculty Advising: The Impact Upon Freshmen," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 47, pp. 358-363.

who were randomly selected from the classes entering Macalester in the fall of 1964 and 1965 and were assigned (ten men and ten women) to each adviser. The remaining freshmen in each class comprised the "control group" and were assigned to advisers with full teaching loads. Data collected revealed that the students in the experimental group were more satisfied with their faculty advisers but there were no significant differences between the two groups on: a) rate of retention; b) grade point average; c) level of aspiration; d) satisfaction with the college; and, e) perception of the campus.

Mr. Rossman's study, as stated above, revealed there was no significant difference between his two experimental groups other than greater satisfaction on the part of one group. This might suggest that there is a different approach to advisement which would be more effective such as professional advisement.

Studies which could have some bearing upon this study and which reveal a couple of the weaknesses inherent in a study of this nature are seen in the study by Mr. A. S. Luchins,<sup>6</sup> in which he teaches that the first (primary) impressions are usually more powerful and favorable than the last impressions. These first impressions, as Luchins indicates, have a disproportional influence upon the subject. Thus, in a study of this nature, the student having been exposed to one or the other forms of advisement could have a biased feeling toward that

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<sup>6</sup>A. S. Luchins, "Recency in Impressions Formation," Quoted by C. I. Hovland, The Order of Presentation in Persuasion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), Vol. I.

form to which he was initially exposed. There is a possibility that in spite of the efforts to keep the group as consistent and homogenous as possible, some of the students may have been exposed to both types of advisement. Thus, Mr. Luchin's primary effect could be a factor influencing the results.

Victor Cline and J. M. Richards,<sup>7</sup> of the University of Utah, conducted some research from which they clearly found that the ability to judge others is a highly general trait. In conducting this present research and in examining the results and responses to the questionnaire for advisement, one must take this finding into consideration.

Another consideration reading the results of a study of this nature was brought out in some research by Milton Rosenberg,<sup>8</sup> of Yale University, which demonstrated that intensity of feeling toward an object (person) or an attitude, are associated with what the individual believes to be its "instrumental value" in facilitating or blocking the achievement of goals. The study suggests that objects or attitudes of persons, which are seen as means for goal achievement, are evaluated favorably, whereas those which are seen as sources of frustration are evaluated unfavorably. This could either be a positive or a negative influence on the results of the study. If a student

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<sup>7</sup>Victor Cline and J. M. Richards, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1961), p. 76.

<sup>8</sup>Milton Rosenberg, Quoted by Matthew W. Miles and W. W. Charters, Jr., Learning in Social Settings. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1970), p. 240.

views negatively something his adviser told him, he will respond negatively to the questionnaire, even though, in fact, the adviser is not at fault. One must, also, recognize that the reverse could indeed occur as easily.

A study by Claude Sanders,<sup>9</sup> at Eastern Illinois University, on "Student Perceptions of Sources of Assistance for Problems" found that there was no significant difference between professional advisers and faculty members in respect to being sought out for academic and vocational assistance.

Of the freshmen who participated in the study, at Eastern Illinois University, 27.1 percent sought help from the advisement counselor, whereas, 34.1 percent sought help from the faculty adviser. Although more students used the faculty for their academic problems in this study, there did not appear to be a large enough difference to justify any other conclusion. It might be mentioned, too, that in 1968 the advisement center, at Eastern Illinois University, was new and less effective than it is today.

In a preliminary study of "Student Appraisal of Faculty Advisement versus Advisement Counselors," (1971) the researcher<sup>10</sup> attempted to evaluate the existing quality of the faculty adviser and advisement counselor currently in use at Eastern Illinois

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<sup>9</sup>Claude Sanders, "Student Perceptions of Sources of Assistance for Problems," (unpublished research, Eastern Illinois University, 1968).

<sup>10</sup>Dale Kuntzman, "Student Appraisal of Faculty Advisement versus Advisement Counselors," (unpublished research, Eastern Illinois University, 1971).

University and to evaluate student perceptions of both forms of advisement. The students in this study were exposed to both forms of advisement. As a result of this study, the indication was, although there was a more positive reaction to professional advisement, that the overall differences in student responses were not great enough to be significant. The only finding was an acknowledged consensus among the students that the advisement counselor in academic advisement is apparently more effective and successful than his counterpart among the faculty. In addition, an analysis of the responses to the eighteen item questionnaire indicates greater confidence in the advisement counselor.

A study and advisement project by John Ravekes<sup>11</sup> pointed out, in effect, the differences between student reaction or evaluation of indiscriminate faculty advisement and what might be defined as a professional and centralized approach to advisement. This study and evaluation revealed that students and faculty felt that the advisement system, as it existed in their institution, (Dundalk Community College, Dundalk, Maryland) was ineffective and unable to advise students adequately. The institution had established an advisement system based completely on decentralized or faculty advisement. As a result of the ineffectiveness of faculty advisement, the institution decided to develop and implement a new advising system.

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<sup>11</sup>John Ravekes, "Development and Evaluation of Essex Community College's Revised Academic Advising System," NASPA Journal, 9, April, 1971, pp. 237-241.

The new system of academic advisement was developed on the basis of a careful selection of faculty, administrative, and counselor personnel. These individuals were given the sole responsibility of advising and structured interviews were scheduled with continuing students who, also, were advised under the previous system. A questionnaire was given to all the students who were exposed to both approaches of advisement. This questionnaire elicited from the students their evaluation regarding the revised system. Of the 240 full time students completing the questionnaire, 85 percent found the new advising system more appropriate and effective. This project and evaluation seems to make apparent that professionally trained and readily accessible professional advisers, even though these advisers are faculty members, are more effective and positively accepted by students than indiscriminate faculty advisement.

Mr. V. P. Meskill and Mr. W. Sheffield published two descriptive and developmental (Trend) studies in which they discussed professional academic advisement. According to Dr. Van Dalen, this method of descriptive research is a valid approach. Dr. Van Dalen states, "Developmental studies are concerned not only with the existing status and interrelationship of phenomena, but also with changes that take place as a function of time."<sup>12</sup>

In the first of the two studies, by Mr. Meskill and

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<sup>12</sup>Deobold B. VanDalen, Understanding Educational Research (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 319.



Mr. Sheffield,<sup>13</sup> "A New Specialty: Full Time Academic Counselor," the authors attempted to look at a new approach to academic advisement and counseling other than faculty advisement. The authors reported that, "the practice of distributing the academic counseling work load over the entire faculty had failed to function satisfactorily." As a result, they proposed that a full time staff of professional academic counselors be established. A staff of twelve full time professional academic counselors was organized from the development of this proposal. From the preliminary reports from all phases of the new program, according to the authors, the new system was very encouraging and strongly indicated a positive solution to the problems that existed under faculty advisement.

Mr. Meskill and Mr. Sheffield's second research project, "Faculty Adviser and Academic Counselor: A Pragmatic Marriage"<sup>14</sup> was the culmination of what was initiated from their first project (1970) reported above--a two year project of full time professional academic advisers to replace faculty advisers. As a result of Mr. Meskill's initial pilot study, there resulted, as he described it, a "pragmatic marriage" between the faculty adviser and the professional academic adviser.

In the second project, a thirteen item questionnaire

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<sup>13</sup>V. P. Meskill and W. Sheffield, "A New Specialty: Full Time Academic Counselors," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 49, 1970, pp. 55-58.

<sup>14</sup>V. P. Meskill and W. Sheffield, "Faculty Adviser and Academic Counselor: A Pragmatic Marriage," ibid., 13, 1972, pp. 28-30.

was given to all full time faculty members and all full time undergraduate students who experienced both faculty advising and the professional advising. Sixty-eight percent of the students who responded to the questionnaire, endorsed academic advisement over faculty advisement. The respondents, however, did not endorse academic counseling as being far more desirable than faculty advising. The authors of this project summarized the results by saying:

...that the service\* offered was not significantly better than previous services when measured in terms of promptness of interview, length of interview, and reliability of information offered. The services offered apparently did exceed earlier service, according to many written student comments, in terms of concern for students expressed by having academic counseling available for five days a week throughout the academic year. This factor apparently led to the strong endorsement of academic counselors....

Since there was no significant difference in the services rendered between the two groups and that there appears to be no model of academic counseling which is significantly better than another, the authors proposed a unification of both forms suggesting this might be the best approach to academic advisement.

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\*Referring to academic counseling services.

## CHAPTER IV

### Research Methodology

The development of this research grew from a desire to determine which form of advisement is most effective-- faculty advisement or the professional advisement counselor. The study included the examination of several books, periodicals, other available printed matter about academic advisement and the statistical analysis of a twenty-eight item questionnaire. From the review of literature evolved a broad general pool of information from which many sources were rejected because they were inapplicable to the subject of this study. The most significant and appropriate literature was summarized and presented in the preceding chapter. All resources, however, contributed to a clearer definition of the scope of this study and to the development of the questionnaire.

The participants in this study consisted, as stated earlier, of three groups of students of which some were only exposed to faculty advisement and some only to the professional adviser. The identification of these two different academically advised groups was important to this study. Having identified the two different groups and reviewing what literature there is related to this research, reaffirmed the plausibility of a

researchable topic. As a result of having identified the comparable groups and selecting the subjects for the study, the next step was to examine possible techniques of research. The nature of this study to determine the prevalent conditions and attitudes toward academic advisement and to identify some prevailing relationships suggests that the descriptive survey method of research would be appropriate. This method may be described as follows:

Descriptive surveys may include present facts or current conditions concerning the nature of a group of persons, a number of objects, or a class of events, and may involve the procedures of induction, analysis, classification, enumeration, or measurement.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. D. Van Dalen has divided descriptive research into three categories: 1) survey studies, 2) interrelationship studies; and 3) developmental studies. To define more precisely this research, the definition for survey studies possibly should be given even though there are traces of the other forms of descriptive research. Dr. Van Dalen states:

When trying to solve problems man... often conduct surveys. They collect detailed descriptions of existing phenomena with the intent of employing the data to justify current conditions and practices.... Their objective may be not only to ascertain status, but also to determine the adequacy of status by comparing it with selected or established standards.

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<sup>15</sup>Carter V. Good, Essentials of Educational Research (New York: Appleton-Century-Crafts, Inc., 1966), p. 192.

Surveys may be broad or narrow in scope. They may encompass several countries or may be confined to one nation, region, state, city, school system, or some other unit. Survey data may be gathered from every member of a population or from a carefully selected sample. Data may be collected concerning a large number of related factors or a few selected items. The scope and depth of the study depends primarily upon the nature of the problem.<sup>16</sup>

The purpose, then, of the descriptive survey investigation may be to obtain evidence regarding existing situations or conditions, to identify standards for the comparison of present conditions, or to determine what should be done on the basis of new found information. The descriptive-survey method is especially significant in situations where diagnosis is needed to ascertain whether or not a certain task is being accomplished or if objectives are being met. This type of research is often broad in scope and may serve as a possible impetus for further detailed analysis.

The instrument decided upon for this study is a questionnaire (see appendix). The questionnaire was developed as closely as possible along the following general guidelines:

1. It must be short enough so as not to take too much time and so that the respondents would not reject it completely.

2. It must have some initial face appeal so that the respondents would be

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<sup>16</sup>Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research, p. 206.

inclined to react positively to it and to complete it.

3. The questionnaire should obtain some depth to the response in order to avoid superficial replies. The author attempted also to obtain precise answers so that the results could be more accurately determined.

4. The idea questionnaire must not be too suggestive or too unstimulating, particularly with reference to choices.

5. The questionnaire should elicit responses that are definite but not mechanically forced.

6. Questions must be asked in such a way that the responses will not be embarrassing to the individual.

7. Questions must be asked in such a manner as to allay suspicion on the part of the respondent concerning hidden responses in the questionnaire.

8. The questionnaire must not be too narrow, restrictive, or limited in its scope or philosophy.

9. The responses to the questionnaire must be valid, and the entire body of data taken as a whole must answer the basic question for which the questionnaire was designed.<sup>17</sup>

While many beginning researchers turn to the questionnaire as an investigative tool, Good<sup>18</sup> indicates that the questionnaire method is neither simple nor quick but requires time, patience, ingenuity, and skill. The closed form of

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<sup>17</sup>Good, p. 221, citing Douglas E. Scates and Alice V. Yoemans, The Effect of Questionnaire Form on Course Requests of Employed Adults (Washington: American Council of Education, 1950), pp. 2-4.

<sup>18</sup>Good, ibid., p.213.

question was primarily elected for the questionnaire and one part open for comments to allow some freedom of expression among the respondents. The closed form of question is where the objective is to have the respondents identify their feelings and where the degree of respondent information about the topic is reasonably high. It is assumed that the respondents' opinions regarding the items are well defined, when there are no assumed barriers to communication.<sup>19</sup>

Based on the nature of this research, the hypotheses advanced, and the type of information needed, it was decided that the questionnaire, then, should be used. To obtain this information, a twenty-eight item questionnaire was constructed to elicit information in such areas as: 1) adviser effectiveness (personal attributes), 2) informativeness of the adviser, 3) general appraisal of advisement, and 4) the general utilization of advisement by students. The Likert-type response items from one, which indicated an extremely negative or low evaluation, to five, which indicated an extremely positive, or very high evaluation were used to ascertain the respondents feelings or attitudes toward their adviser and advisement as to the four areas mentioned above. The Likert-type response items were, also, used because the results are more easily quantified, and constructed for easy tabulation and transfer to data processing equipment for summarization and statistical treatment. From the questionnaire it was possible to receive

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

a total raw score for each respondent and, thus, evaluate the difference between the means of two independent samples.

While it is true that a five-point scale is somewhat arbitrary, there is no fixed standard as indicated by the following:

A rating scale ascertains the degree, intensity or frequency of a variable. To construct such a scale, an investigator identifies the factor to be measured, places units or categories on a scale to differentiate varying degrees of the factor, and describes these units in some manner. No established rule governs the number of units that should be placed on a scale but having too few categories tends to produce crude measures and having too many categories makes it difficult for the rater to discriminate between one step and the next on the scale. The description of the scale units may consist of points, numbers or descriptive phrases along a line.<sup>20</sup>

While the use of the questionnaire rating scale is often the only economical or practical way to ascertain respondents' opinions about certain phenomena, there are some inherent weaknesses in their use. Dr. Van Dalen, regarding the use of the questionnaire, indicates that, "...they often fail to reveal the respondents' motives, do not always yield information of sufficient scope or depth, and may not discriminate between fine shades of meaning." Regarding the rating scale, Dr. Van Dalen says, "Fixed alternative responses may make respondents take a stand upon issues about which they have no crystallized opinion or may force them to give answers

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<sup>20</sup>Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research, p. 319.



that do not accurately express their ideas."<sup>21</sup> Van Dalen goes on and states, to the effect, that if proper precautions are taken, by the researcher in developing the questionnaire, the weaknesses listed above can be somewhat overcome.

The information sought from this study was particularly adaptable to the descriptive-survey method of research and, as in studies like this one, did not demand involved statistical procedures. The researcher felt that the moderate use of statistics would enhance the value of the study rather than detract from it. Thus, the researcher plans to treat the data in tabular and descriptive form using percentages and means. Much of this type of treatment has to do with characterizing the populations with respect to certain attitudes and feelings toward advisement. The standard score (Z score) will be used to determine if there exists any significant difference between the means of the three comparable groups. The Z scores were computed to ascertain the extent of relationships and to determine the credibility of the null hypothesis mentioned in Chapter I.

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<sup>21</sup>ibid., p. 302.

## CHAPTER V

### Results and Conclusions

As stated earlier, the basic purpose of this research was to determine whether there exists any significant difference in the attitudes toward academic advisement between students exposed to centralized, or professional advisement, and students exposed to decentralized, or faculty advisement. In addition to this overall appraisal of the two different forms of advisement, the researcher was also interested in looking more precisely at student reactions in such areas as: 1) adviser effectiveness; 2) general appraisal of advisement; 3) adviser knowledge, and 4) adviser utilization as these relate to the different methods of advisement.

In order to study the responses of students from the three identifiable groups, data run-offs from the responses to the questionnaire were made by the Eastern Illinois University computer center. There were 75 questionnaires sent out to each group. This figure was arrived at so that the number of respondents could be kept at a manageable size. Also, the size of the samples are appropriate for the statistical technique used in this research. Of the students given the questionnaire, 59 percent returned the completed questionnaire. The percentage

of respondents from each group are given in Table I.

TABLE I

Number and Percentages of Questionnaires  
Returned By Groups

Group	Number Returned	Percent Of Return
I	45	60
II	32	42
III	55	73
All Groups	132	59

In order to compare the three groups as to their attitudes toward advisement, as well as to the aforementioned areas, the computer center provided the researcher with raw scores and the percentages of negative and positive responses for each item on the questionnaire. With such data, ordinal-level tests of significance could be selected. According to Dr. D. Champion, such tests are appropriate where data are available that can be ranked in some manner.<sup>22</sup> In order to find out whether anything was happening between the three independent samples with respect to their ordinal-level characteristics, the Kruskal Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance Test (H Test) was selected. Also, since the samples in this research are not equal in size, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test offered an additional advantage. According,

<sup>22</sup>Dean J. Champion, Basic Statistics for Social Research (Scranton: Chandler Publishing Co., 1970), p. 159.

to Dr. Champion, the H Test is appropriate for samples of both equal as well as unequal sizes.<sup>23</sup>

The results of running the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance Test indicated that there was some significant difference between, at least, one pair of the three independent samples at the .05 level of significance. The results were not significant at the .01 level. The H value is treated as a  $\chi^2$  value for interpretive purposes with a K-1 degree of freedom. We found that an H value equal to, or greater than, 5.991 was needed in order for the samples to be different from one another at the .05 level of significance. An H value of 9.210 is needed at the .01 level (see Table II). Since the observed H is 6.172, it could be concluded that a significant difference between two of the samples occurred at the  $P \leq .05$  level.

TABLE II

Level of Significance  
Needed at the .05 and .01 Level

Level of Significance	Needed for Level of Significance	H Value Obtained
* $P \leq .05$	5.991	6.172
* $P \leq .01$	9.210	

\*For two-tailed tests at 2 df.

In order to ascertain between which groups there was a significant difference between the means, the Mann-Whitney

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

U Test was run between all the combinations of two groups from the three samples. This test is appropriate for the research because the assumptions of the test are met. The test assumes that the samples are independent and randomly drawn with ordinal-level data.

From the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test, both the null hypothesis and the research hypothesis must be rejected. The null hypothesis, which stated that no significant difference in attitude would exist between the professional advisement group and the faculty advisement groups, must be rejected because a significant difference resulted at the  $P \leq .05$  level between groups 1 and 2. These two groups represent professional advisement and faculty advisement respectively.

Although the study revealed a significant difference with respect to professional and faculty advisement when groups 1 and 2 were compared, this same difference did not emerge when the group of professionally advised counselees (group 1) was compared to the second group of faculty advised counselees (group 3). Since the research hypothesis stated that if a difference between the two approaches to advisement existed that professional advisement would be more favorably accepted, the research hypothesis had to also be rejected. The Z score between groups 1 and 3 was  $-.304$  which indicated no significant difference between the two groups. A Z score equal to or greater than 1.96 was needed at the .05 level of significance (see Table III). It was, therefore, necessary to

reject the research hypothesis since both groups 1 and 3 responded positively to their respective forms of advisement.

As stated earlier, the purpose of this research developed from a desire to assess whether professional advisement is overall more effective than faculty advisement. As was indicated above, there appeared to be some significant difference when a comparison of group 2 is made with groups 1 and 3. However, the significant difference existing between these comparisons do not appear when a comparison is made between groups 1 and 3. Group 2, representing faculty advisement, differed significantly with both forms of advisement. This revealed an interesting result in relation to this group. Group 2, which was exposed to faculty or decentralized advisement, responded more negatively to advisement than either of the other two groups. The comparison of responses between group 2 with both groups 1 and 3 were significant at the  $P \leq .05$  level (see Table III). The reason for such differences is not clear. Perhaps since group 2 had already graduated from the institution and, therefore, no longer felt the personal loyalty to the institution, they were more open and objective regarding their criticism of academic advisement. It, however, is beyond the scope of this researcher to speculate as to why this group was significantly more negative to advisement than groups 1 and 3, particularly to group 3 the other faculty advised group. This finding, however, might suggest a topic for some future research in this area.

TABLE III

Comparison of Z Scores Between Groups

Comparison Groups	Z Scores <sup>a</sup>
1 & 2	-2.58 <sup>b</sup>
1 & 3	- .304
2 & 3	-2.63 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Need a  $Z \geq 1.96$  at .05 level of significance

<sup>b</sup>Significant at the .05 level

The researcher, in order to obtain a more complete assessment, felt it desirable to use, in addition to the Mann-Whitney U Test, some more simple statistical procedures in examining the responses from each group as they particularly relate to the four areas mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In order to accomplish this, the descriptive survey technique of percentages was used with the U Test to discover whether there existed any significant and/or possibly acknowledged consensus between the research groups. It is to these four areas the researcher will direct his attention in the proceeding pages.

The items that were used in the questionnaire were developed to give a clear picture of student reaction to the two forms of advisement as related to the following four areas: 1) adviser effectiveness; 2) appraisal of advisement; 3) adviser information and knowledge; and, 4) adviser utilization. When

these four areas were examined separately as to any significant differences between groups, the results corresponded with the earlier overall findings of the research at least as to the first three areas. That is, a significant difference was found to exist between group 2 and both groups 1 and 3. No significant difference was found to exist between group 1 and group 3 (see Tables 4 to 7). However, the exception to this pattern was discovered to exist in the area of adviser utilization (Table 7). In this area, it was found that there did not exist a significant difference between group 2 with groups 1 and 3. The finding apparently indicates that all three groups of students utilized their advisers during their academic tenure. This would seem to give some support to the idea that the advisees in all three groups had adequate exposure to their advisers to make valid assessments or judgments as to the overall effectiveness of their respective forms of advisement.

In addition to the significant differences between the three groups mentioned above, the researcher, by using percentages (see Tables 8 to 12) of those responding negatively\* and positively\* to the four areas of consideration, was able to make some additional observations. Although these differences can not be considered significant, they did reveal some interesting class differences between the groups, particularly groups 1 and 3. It is to these two groups which the researcher would like

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\*Of the five possible responses on the Likert Scale used in the questionnaire, responses 1 and 2 were considered negative, 3, a moderate response and 4 and 5 positive responses.



to make some final observations. Group 2 is omitted since it has been shown previously to differ significantly with the other two groups.

In our consideration of the responses to group 1, representing professional advisement, and group 3, representing faculty advisement, there are a few salient results which should be pointed out, even though these differences are not significant. From the items which make up Table 8, we are able to receive an indication as to advisee attitudes toward general adviser effectiveness. It is found that in both groups, adviser effectiveness is viewed quite positively with 65 percent in group 1 and 67 percent in group 3 responding positively and only 16 percent and 14 percent respectively responding negatively. This same general pattern is carried over into the general appraisal of advisement (Table 9). Here, however, a lesser percentage responded positively--58 percent for each group. Although the same percentage of the respondents responded positively to a general appraisal of advisement, there appears to be an interesting group difference in responses in the negative area. Only 6 percent responded negatively for professional advisement as compared to 15 percent responding negatively to faculty advisement. It is apparent then when it came to assessing advisement that more students exposed to professional advisement chose to respond in a moderate way rather than the extreme negative end of the Likert Scale as is apparent with those responding to faculty advisement.

TABLE IV

Comparison of General Adviser Effectiveness	
Comparison Groups	Z Scores <sup>a</sup>
1 & 2	-2.21 <sup>b</sup>
1 & 3	- .079
2 & 3	-2.39 <sup>b</sup>

TABLE V

Comparison of General Appraisal of Advisement	
Comparison Groups	Z Scores <sup>a</sup>
1 & 2	-3.32 <sup>b</sup>
1 & 3	1.18
2 & 3	-3.84 <sup>b</sup>

TABLE VI

Comparison of General Information and Knowledge of Advisement	
Comparison Groups	Z Scores <sup>a</sup>
1 & 2	-2.52 <sup>b</sup>
1 & 3	- .966
2 & 3	-1.96 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Need a  $Z \geq 1.96$  at .05 level of significance

<sup>b</sup>Significant at the .05 level

TABLE VII

Comparison of General Adviser  
Utilization Advisers

Comparison Groups	Z Scores <sup>a</sup>
1 & 2	.99
1 & 3	.42
2 & 3	1.34

<sup>a</sup>Need a  $Z \geq 1.96$  at .05 level of significance

<sup>b</sup>Significant at the .05 level

TABLE VIII

Adviser Effectiveness

Groups	Percent Negative Response	Percent Positive Response
1	16	65
2	24	52
3	14	67

Note: Related questions in questionnaire 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 26.

TABLE IX

Appraisal of advisement .

Groups	Percent Negative Response	Percent Positive Response
1	6	58
2	27	38
3	15	58

Note: Related questions in questionnaire 5, 13, 23.

TABLE X

## Adviser Information and Knowledge

Groups	Percent Negative Response	Percent Positive Response
1	8	66
2	25	43
3	9	63

Note: Related questions in questionnaire 6, 14, 21, 22, 25.

TABLE XI

## Adviser Utilization

Groups	Percent Negative Response	Percent Positive Response
1	20	57
2	23	52
3	15	62

Note: Related questions in questionnaire 2, 3, 8, 15.

TABLE XII

## Overall Reaction to Academic Advisement

Groups	Percent Negative Response	Percent Positive Response
1	2	40
2	23	25
3	13	65

This observation is further supported by the responses to item 23 of the questionnaire which provided an overall reaction to academic advisement. It was observed here that only 2 percent responded negatively to professional advisement (group 1) as compared to 13 percent responding negatively to faculty advisement (group 3). There appears, however, to exist an acknowledged consensus on the positive end of the scale for group 3 which received 25 percentage points higher than group 1 (see Table 12). It seems apparent, again, that the student exposed to professional advisement responded in a much more moderate fashion than those exposed to faculty advisement. This difference is, however, minor and might not be indicative of any real difference.

On examining the results in Table 10 which deals with advisement information and knowledge, a slight edge is given to professional advisement--66 percent responding positively to professional advisement as compared to 63 percent responding positively to faculty advisement. On the negative end of the response scale, though, there was found only a one percent difference. This, too, is hardly enough difference to even say that a demonstrated group difference existed at all.

In the last area of consideration, regarding adviser utilization, it was discovered that students assigned to faculty advisers apparently used their advisers more than those assigned to professional advisers. The reverse would normally be expected as one would assume that the professional adviser would be

possibly better prepared to advise and more accessible to the student. However, the study indicated that 62 percent of the students assigned to faculty advisers from group 3 utilized their advisers as compared to 57 percent of the students assigned to professional advisers. Again, it must be stated that the difference is quite minor and should not be construed to be meaningful.

After viewing all the data collected as a result of this research, it must be concluded from the researcher's point of view that, in addition to having to reject both the null hypothesis and the research hypothesis, there does not exist from an empirical position even a suggestion of an overall acknowledged consensus as far as groups 1 and 3 are concerned. This conclusion does not apply to group 2. There has been found to exist a significant difference between group 2 and groups 1 and 3. To suggest reasons why group 2 differs significantly and responded more negatively from groups 1 and 3 would be, at best, mere speculation and more appropriately reserved for future research to discover why this occurred. For the purpose of this research, it must be stated again that the professional advisement counselor is apparently no more effective and successful than his counterpart among the faculty. The strongest observation which can be made from the data, as it relates to groups 1 and 3, is to say that the students exposed to professional advisement generally responded overall in a more moderate fashion and tended to be slightly less negative.

APPENDIX

Eastern Illinois University  
Charleston, Illinois 61920

Dear Participant:

Attached you will find a questionnaire to evaluate the academic advisement to which you are being (have been) exposed. Your response and cooperation in completing and returning the attached questionnaire will assist us in evaluating this service to the student by the university. May we ask for your assistance, by taking a few moments from your busy schedule, to respond to the questionnaire and return it to me in the self-addressed envelope.

Your participation and cooperation would be greatly appreciated in this matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dale H. Kuntzman  
Academic Advisement

Attachment



This survey is an attempt to evaluate academic advisement. Your honest and careful response to each question will assist us to accomplish this task. Place a check mark in the space which most accurately indicates your appraisal of each item.

remely negative (lowest evaluation), not at all (no help)  
 elatively negative evaluation, or low, little help  
 oderate evaluation denoting general satisfaction acceptability, or approval  
 airly positive evaluation (high), some help  
 remely positive (highest evaluation), very much (very helpful)

at degree or extent. . .	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
do you feel the university should be responsible to individual students for academic advisement?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did you visit your adivser?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
would you advise your friends to use their academic adviser to help them in their educational pursuits?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did you receive unfavorable information from your adviser?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did the advisement program to which you were exposed seem organized and functional?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did your adviser help you with vocational information and requirements?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
does your adviser give you a chance to talk and express what you are thinking and your interests?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
has the adviser helped you clarify issues regarding educational decisions, such as: degree, major, and vocational choice?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
does your adviser seem sincere in working with you regarding your program?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
do you feel the student should be responsible to himself for academic advisement?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did your adviser help you with any personal appraisal of yourself in relation to your academic choices?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did you feel your adviser was easy to talk to?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
would you rate your adviser's effectiveness in working with you?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
did your adviser seem informed as to the academic requirements of the university?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
have you actively sought help from an adviser when you had academic questions?	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

did your adviser help you design a program to accomplish your academic objectives?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

was your adviser friendly and pleasant to you during your counseling sessions?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

did you feel you needed assistance in planning your academic program?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

was your adviser available to you when you needed information or help?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

did your adviser seem to be attuned to you during the counseling session?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

did your adviser seem knowledgeable regarding your academic questions?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

did your adviser seem informed as to the following: (rate all listed)

Financial aids

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Military status

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Library service

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Registration

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Schedule changes (drop and adds)

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Major requirements

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Degree requirements

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

General requirements

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

General services of the school

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

would you rate your over-all reaction to academic advisement?

did your adviser spend an adequate amount of time with you during your counseling sessions?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

was your adviser able to give you up-to-date academic information?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

does your adviser seem to have a sensitivity to the academic problems of a student?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

did your adviser seem to be unsure of himself?

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

Comments:

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