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The University of North Carolina at Greensboro ED.D. 1985

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AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AT A LARGE UNIVERSITY

by

Margaret S. Carter

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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1985

Approved by

Robert M. O'Kane
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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Advisor Robert M. O'Kane

Committee Members

May 6, 1985
Date of Acceptance by Committee

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Date of Final Oral Examination

CARTER, MARGARET S. Ed.D. An Interpretive Analysis of Some Basic Assumptions of Academic Advising at a Large University. (1985). Directed by Dr. Robert M. O'Kane. 157 pp.

The purpose of this study was to make a critical analysis of six assumptions relating to the operations, functions, and practices of undergraduate academic advising in a large university. The analysis was based on university policies of academic advising, observations, interviews with students, and dialogues with the staff in the Office of Academic Advising. The six assumptions were those typically made by large, comprehensive universities which have established a central office for academic advising.

This study used phenomenological methods in order to draw inferences and bring out underlying assumptions through in-depth interviews with students. Because it was felt that students are most affected by the policies of educational systems, it was their perspectives which were sought.

The subjects interviewed included a selected sample of students who had attended or were attending the university used in the study. In order to provide a set of diverse profiles, eight full-time and part-time students of different ages from divergent ethnic, social, geographic, and racial backgrounds were included. Their diversity and their experiences as undergraduate students at the university were the only criteria for their selection.

There were several recurring themes apparent throughout the student interviews. Every student in the study spoke of the impersonal and uncaring attitudes and actions of faculty,

advisors, and university staff members, and none believed that the size of the institution was the sole explanation. Instead, students blamed the attitudes on the fragmentation of departments into narrowly specialized areas, lack of communication between decision-makers, the low status and perceived lack of power of students, and the bureaucratic organizational structure of the university which tended to create inflexible conditions. The students expressed their frustrations and anger at being treated one moment as if they were incapable of making an intelligent decision, and the next moment being expected to know what to do, how to do it, and take full responsibility for the whole process, all without being given adequate information in order to do so.

The six assumptions were analyzed on the basis of the student interviews, and the results revealed that the assumptions were largely false with regard to meeting their stated objectives. Although the original objectives of academic advising may have been to assist students in their academic needs, the students in the study expressed the belief that the university's main interest in academic advising was to process them as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an interpretive inquiry into the process of academic advising in a large, complex, university setting. It has been determined by many institutions that in order for students to receive the full benefits of their educational experiences, they must be guided by the academic community. This assistance is felt to be essential, if students are to make the best decisions regarding their academic programs of study, fulfill their course requirements, and gain the most from their educational experiences.

Although most schools have some system of academic advising in place, many students are finding that these services, heavily mired in bureaucratic red tape, rules, regulations, and requirements, are not aiding in their personal growth and development. Instead, the process contributes to their feelings of alienation within the university system.

Historical Background for This Study

The influence of the Industrial Revolution and corporate capitalism began to show its effects on educational institutions around the turn of this century. Because of their patterns of organization, support, and control, schools were especially vulnerable to the dominant corporate and indus-

trial forces which influenced them to adopt the role of a centralized social institution, established primarily to produce the types of attitudes and skills beneficial to the needs and expectations of the emerging world of business (Spring, 1972). Education eventually came to be allied with the production process, and schooling was accepted as a means of increasing profits, promoting greater industrial output and better management by turning out the type of man required by business. The influence was further exerted in the form of suggestions or demands that the schools be organized and operated in a more businesslike, efficient way, and that more emphasis be placed on a practical and immediately useful education (Callahan, 1962).

Higher education, especially in larger universities, ostensibly aligned itself with businesslike practices in the interest of efficiency and in an attempt to serve its constituency in a fair and equitable manner. According to Parsons and Platt (1973), a substantial bureaucratic component has long characterized university operations, especially the larger universities, and Perkinson (1971) believed that such bureaucratic and authoritarian components are the direct result of the size of the institution. Parsons and Platt (1973, p. 128) felt that such bureaucracy and authoritarianism have no place in an institution of higher learning, and stated, "the institution of academic freedom is the antithesis of bureaucratic subordination;"

they believed that the role of education has been redefined under increasing authoritarianism.

What is thought of as a "liberal arts education" does not include as part of its philosophy an authoritarian framework. Rather, historically, a liberal arts education has been primarily concerned with liberating the individual, exposing that person to a broad spectrum of ideas and interests, and developing an unlimited measure of creative growth within the mind and spirit. "It is less concerned with the right answers in life than with the right questions." (Benezet, 1970, p. 54).

The liberal arts concept was first threatened in the late 1800s by society's increasing preoccupation with utilitarian education, put into place in order to take advantage of the new economy. The assistance to public institutions through the Morrill Acts forced private liberal arts colleges to offer more practical disciplines, and pressure was exerted by private industry and business for specialized research and programs to foster private ends (Anderson, 1977).

Excessive specialization and departmentalization have also been blamed for the breakdown in the liberal arts philosophy in higher education. Harrington (1977, p. 55) stated that such fragmentation has been practiced "at the expense of generalizations, broad learning, and interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary studies," and that such specialization has been criticized since its inclusion in

American higher education, mainly for what Dean Andrew F. West called "the break-up of knowledge into pieces," and for what Irving Babbitt referred to as the "maiming and mutilation of the mind that comes from over-absorption in one subject."

In the twentieth century, the authoritarianism of higher education, and the high degree of specialization firmly fixed within the academic disciplines and student support services at most institutions, has been supported by innovations in educational technology. According to Perkinson (1971, p. 108), educational technicians have developed ways and means that better enable educators to control, direct, and manipulate students through more scientifically accurate tests and measurement, in "teacher-proof, pedagogical methods," and in the form of "more scientifically sound techniques of administration, supervision, counseling, and guidance." Institutions take on the function of processing people, which, he argued, result in the victimization of students. As the group with the least amount of power, students are felt to be lacking in the knowledge and the experience necessary for them to make their own decisions. The guidance and information which was initially provided has evolved, under an increasingly self-perpetuating bureaucratic system of governance, into a process of setting inflexible rules and regulations. Students become preoccupied with satisfying those rules and regulations, to the exclusion of

their own best interests.

According to Perkinson (1971, pp. 94-95), when students pay less attention to the quality of their education because of their concern for the process that must be followed, they accept the role of functionary; they act like passive subordinates, and that is how they are treated--controlled, regulated, manipulated. This serves to alienate them from the educational process, which becomes "something to be done as quickly as possible," something to be endured so that the degree can be obtained.

In Goodman's (1965) words, schools take on the responsibility of "processing" young people, changing them from people to personnel--subordinates who must be told what to do, and penalized if they do not perform adequately. If students are to be successful, he felt, they must learn respect for authority and acclimate themselves to testing, classification, ranking, and role assignment. In order to process students more efficiently and fairly, goals are pre-set and procedures are predetermined for them.

Need for the Study

The goals of early American institutions, established over 300 years ago, were for the perpetuation, enrichment, and transmission of the culture. Basically, the children of the well-to-do, the country's leading families, were the recipients of this educational opportunity. When boarding

students enrolled in these early colleges, they lived in the home of the institution's president, and received counseling and guidance from him in loco parentis. Because the curriculum was essentially fixed, there was little need for individual academic planning and advising. The student either successfully followed the established course of study or he failed. According to E. L. Jones (1977, p. 8), "His physical and mental behavior was tied to a moral duty to perform or not to perform. Advising was pretty easy under those rigid circumstances."

During the 1800's, the curriculum in higher education changed very little; however, the student bodies of American universities increased significantly. This growth brought about changes in the university's goals and objectives; one notable difference involved the increasingly democratic nature of schools, as newly established state institutions began to admit children from less wealthy and prominent families. Advising during this period continued to be done by those with whom the students lived. As the curriculum of most schools expanded to accommodate more practical concerns, and as more elective courses were added, faculty members were given more responsibilities. Among those was the duty of academic advising. The faculty became the first true academic advisors (Jones, 1977).

As World War II veterans enrolled in colleges and universities in the late 1940's on the G. I. Bill,

significant changes in the assumptions regarding student needs began to occur. As adults returning to school, these students required more help in readjusting to academic life and demanded more critical and analytical thinking from their instructors. They found, however, that most institutions were still structured to meet the needs of younger, upper-class, more traditionally aged students. Since academic advising was also designed for this latter group, advisors were not adequately prepared to work effectively with more mature, more serious students (Jones, 1977).

Enrollment in the early 1950's continued to increase, causing a re-evaluation of the academic advising process. Professionals began to be hired as full-time academic advisors, specifically responsible for advising students in their academic programs, providing preprofessional guidance, and arranging for other contacts and services (Jones, 1977). By the 1960's, especially in large, comprehensive, state institutional settings, the curriculum greatly expanded, and student services increased considerably. Along with the continued goal to promote education for the purpose of producing "well-rounded" individuals was an increased focus on pragmatic concerns; more emphasis began to be placed on academic advising and career planning which would promote the employability of graduates. It became increasingly necessary for academic advisors to be knowledgeable, not only about general academic programs, but also about those programs

which would prepare a student for a specific vocation or career.

With the increased diversity of the college population, it was also necessary that advisors be cognizant of special needs, services, and programs for special groups such as minorities, women, handicapped persons, et al. In fact, academic advising, as it is currently practiced in most institutions of higher learning, is a multifaceted entity whose parameters are vaguely defined and whose organizational structure varies from school to school.

Academic advising, especially in larger, state-supported institutions, has been established as a separate department, centralized for the sake of efficiency in an educationally bureaucratic structure, and perceived as a viable "retention tool." More importantly, however, such advising is now crucial, if an institution is to meet the diverse needs of its students in support of the liberal arts focus that so many institutions still deem to be important. It seems apparent that many assumptions regarding the operations, functions, and practices of academic advising need to be critically examined, if the basic philosophies of a liberal arts education are to be realized.

Purpose of the Study

I served as an academic advisor in the Office of Academic Advising of a large, state university, from August, 1984, through June, 1985. During this period, I became aware of a

number of assumptions which typify the guiding principles for the day-to-day operations of academic advising.

The purpose of this study was to make a critical analysis of six assumptions relating to the operations, functions, and practices of undergraduate academic advising at a large university. The analysis was based on the policies of academic advising, observations, interviews with students, and dialogues with the academic advising staff.

Assumptions about Academic Advising

Six assumptions made by the university regarding academic advising were identified as being central to the functions, operations, and practices of undergraduate advising in most large university settings.

Assumption #1. That the faculty should be the primary academic advisors, and that the advising function should be a part of their overall contractual responsibilities.

As stated in the 1984-85 university bulletin:

> Each student is assigned a faculty advisor. This advisor meets with the student during orientation, pre-registration, and at such times that the student needs advice to help in selecting courses and assistance in planning an individual program of study . . . Once a major is selected, the student works with an assigned faculty advisor from the appropriate department or school.

Assumption #2. That a central office for academic advising is necessary in a large institution, for the purpose of coordinating undergraduate advising.

As stated in the 1984-85 Student Handbook:

> The Office of the Dean of Academic Advising has as one of its purposes the coordination of the academic advising services available to students at this University. Members of the faculty serve in the Dean's Office so that academic advisors are available during the day to advise students. Students should consult with their own faculty advisor first.

Assumption #3. That students should be able to read the university catalog in order to gain most of the necessary information regarding their academic needs and programs, and that the responsibility for completing academic requirements rests with each student.

As stated in the 1984-85 university bulletin:

> Each student is responsible for the proper completion of his academic program based on the requirements stated in the Catalog. Advisors are available to help students with planning and with academic problems, but the responsibility remains with the student.

Assumption #4. That a central office for academic advising is a specialized department, and, as such, should be concerned only with academic matters.

As stated in the 1984-85 Student Handbook:

> The Office of the Dean of Academic Advising renders the following services:
> - provides professional staff to advise undergraduates relative to all academic matters;
> - provides audits of students' academic records to see that degree requirements are being met;
> - provides a resource to which students may turn when they face problems relative to academic matters.

Directives to staff members in the Office of Academic Advising are that the advice to students must be limited to academic matters, by virtue of the academic nature of the office. Further, the existence of a Counseling Center for

advising of a more personal nature and a Placement Center for guidance regarding career planning require the separation of responsibilities.

Assumption #5. That if a student is interested in deviating from formally established university programs and procedures, the burden of proof is on the student to convince various administrators and committees within the university that such an alternative be allowed.

A few examples of situations a student may encounter which supports the assumption are as follows:

(1) substitution of "required" courses with courses that may be more relevant to the student's total program;

(2) the Plan II option, which involves submitting in writing to the Dean of Academic Advising a proposed course of study, in which students explain their educational goals, and explain why they cannot be met through the conventional degree programs. The Dean of Academic Advising, after consultation with an appropriate member of the primary department concerned, refers the proposal for approval, modification, or rejection to the members of a committee of the department, school or college. If approved by this committee, the proposal is then submitted for formal approval, modification, or rejection to the Curriculum Committee (1984-85 university bulletin).

(3) dropping a course after a certain date, regardless of the reasons.

Assumption #6. That student retention is an important concern of the Office of Academic Advising.

In December, 1984, a special Student Retention Project was initiated by the Office of Academic Advising, in conjunction with the Admissions Office, for the purpose of improving student retention in the university. A campus-wide survey was sent to all faculty advisors and to students, in order to assess the quality of academic advising in the university.

Limitations of the Study

This study investigated six assumptions regarding academic advising operations, functions, and practices at a large, state university. The findings in this study focused on a critical analysis in order to inform, to raise the level of consciousness of the reader, and to create an atmosphere for meaningful dialogue about the present rationale surrounding academic advising. It did not attempt to create a model or to make specific recommendations for improvement.

Further, as interpretive research, this study was based on the underlying personal experiences and feelings of students and did not rely on quantitative data. This may be viewed as a limitation from the perspective of those who hold to a specific theory of rationality. Perkinson (1971) stated that according to this theory, only those claims and ideas which can be justified through some quantifiable means should

be accepted. However, it was felt that an interpretive approach was as justifiable, because it dealt with the perceptions of those directly involved with an issue, and it facilitated an atmosphere for open discussion among those most affected by the perceived inadequacies under scrutiny.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many educators believe that during the 1980s, colleges and universities will be forced to accommodate an increasingly diverse range of students: in age, in educational purposes, in academic background and preparation, in socioeconomic status, and in ethnicity (Jencks & Reisman, 1977; Mayhew, 1979; Chickering, 1981). It no longer makes sense for institutions of higher education to focus their concerns on students between the ages of 18 and 23, who are middle class and academically skilled. In order to respond more effectively to these new groups of students, many institutional programs and departments are being re-examined with the underlying objective of determining necessary additions and modifications. Academic advising is one area that is currently being reassessed.

The literature on academic advising appeared to consider two purposes: academic advising as a viable retention tool during a time of declining enrollments and increasing student diversity, and academic advising as a developmental approach, aimed toward providing an educational experience that treats the whole student.

It was the opinion of D. S. Green (1985, p. 96) that many institutions of higher learning used student retention programs more as "self-serving scams" than for the welfare of

students. He felt that many schools neglect to distinguish honestly between those two purposes, and that the result is often "small doses of remediation" or special counseling programs, which "look good on paper," but whose overall effectiveness appears questionable. Some approaches attempted to incorporate both retention and whole-student concerns in the same model. Habley (1981, p. 49) proposed an Advisement-Retention Model, which, although cognizant of the importance of student needs, nonetheless qualified each altruistic element in the individualized advising process with a self-serving statement of purpose: "In performing this function, the advisor clearly aids in the retention program;" "In doing so, the advisor promotes student educational goals and also serves the retention effort;" "The result is an increased probability of classroom stimulation and the outcome is a student who is more likely to remain enrolled." Retention strategies are often the popular focus of papers and discussions at professional conferences. A presentation at the 1977 National Conference on Academic Advising, entitled "Retaining Students Through Centralized Freshmen and Undeclared Advisement," (Patton, 1977) dealt with both the improvement of advisement and the decrease of attrition as its dual concerns. Another, entitled "Advising Minority Students" (Clayton & Goodrich, 1977) focused almost exclusively on calculated, "data driven" advising strategies aimed at improving the retention of

minority students on predominantly white campuses. The actual advising recommendations regarding special needs were presented in such a broad way as to encompass almost a secondary element in the program. Grites, in a 1979 Higher Education Research Report, defined academic advising rather broadly as "a decision-making process during which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication exchanges with an advisor." (p. 1). Interspersed throughout his overview of the process, however, was also the notion of academic advising as an effective recruitment and retention tool, which could be best utilized through "expert management." (p. 3).

Many institutions have made the assumption that academic advising could be a valuable retention tool. However, where it is true that student retention is an important concern for today's colleges and universities, this mechanical emphasis in an area as personal and as individualistic as academic advising is supposed to be, seemed somewhat disparate and philosophically opposed to the original goals and purposes of advising for human development. The by-product of effective student advising would undoubtedly be improved retention of students; however, the notion that retention and student management should be a major, stated part of the ultimate objectives of an academic advising program seemed somewhat out of character with its humanistic goals.

Developmental Models of Academic Advising

The idea of educating the whole student has been defined as a "developmental" paradigm. Because of its personal, individualistic nature, academic advising has been viewed as one area of higher education with the potential for utilizing a holistic approach to education.

In 1970, Crookson opted for a developmental form of advising which would be concerned not only with specific personal and career decisions, but would also dedicate itself to "facilitating the students' rational processes, environmental and interpersonal interactions, behavioral awareness, and problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation skills." (In Borgard, Hornbuckle, & Mahoney, 1977). O'Banion (1972) presented the first formal plan, a comprehensive model of academic advising which attempted to include within the advising process an exploration of life and vocational goals, as well as the usual concerns for program and course choices and course scheduling. He suggested an integrated team approach to advising, one which would utilize the specialties of counselors, instructors, and student assistants for the different components of the program. Crookson (1972, p. 12) went a step further and described academic advising as a teaching function where, as a teacher, the advisor would stimulate "a positive, shared active approach to both intellectual and interpersonal learning activities."

Bonar (1976) described a systems approach of preservice

training for academic advisors using the same type of instruction as in classrooms, including step-by-step sequential lessons in each area of study. Originally, he presented the training in the form of computer-managed instruction, but redesigned it because computer use proved to be not extensive enough on a long-term basis to be cost effective.

Grites (1977, pp. 34-37) presented an expansion of O'Banion's model, working with the notion that "a successful student development program must be both operational in practice and developmental in concept." His "4 x 4 Model" centered on the institution's academic structure and operated from one or more academic units, rather than from student personnel divisions. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators each contributed to the program in four functional areas:

(1) Primary functions: e.g., graduation requirements and course scheduling;

(2) Professional functions: e.g. career counseling, suggested courses for certain majors;

(3) Personal functions: the incorporation of psychological counselors within a central advising area for the purpose of helping students with social and emotional difficulties;

(4) Programmatic functions: the cooperation between all campus programs with regard to student needs through in-service training and workshops;

and in four developmental stages:

(1) Preview stage: publicizing the program and recruiting those who are to be involved in it;

(2) Planning stage: special collaborative efforts between all participants, especially emphasizing those between faculty and student personnel staffs;

(3) Process stage: the actual performance of planned functions and activities by students and periodic monitoring of each student's progress; and

(4) Postview stage: follow-up contacts and studies with former students for evaluation and information purposes.

Rippey (1981) suggested that the developmental needs of college students could be classified into three categories: the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes; the development of student self-determination; and the development of an ability to control one's environment. From this perspective, he believed that the institution was forced to be responsive not only to the intellectual and academic needs of students, but to their personal and social needs, as well.

In a similar vein, Miller and McCaffrey (1982) believed that a valid developmental model of academic advisement should have at least four characteristics that were not included in most institutions' programs: (1) it would seek to assimilate the intellectual as well as the personal-emotional elements of human development into a comprehensive

whole; (2) it would incorporate systematic training and some type of recognition of highly qualified, competent individuals to be responsible for the overall advising program; (3) it would establish an academic support group consisting of both faculty and academic administrators; and (4) it would consider the cyclical aspect of human development in moving from simple to complex forms of differentiation and integration.

Ender, Winston, and Miller (1982) emphasized the importance of the relationship between academic advising and the personal development of students by calling for a collaboration between all segments of the college community, in order to provide "joint ownership" and involvement. Unlike a number of current approaches to advising, which view the process as being only a peripheral aspect of a student's academic experience, they firmly believed that the overall quality of a student's educational life is "directly proportional to how effectively the academic advising program can affect the full development of the students involved." (p. 8)

Shipton and Steltenpohl (1981) particularly emphasized the importance of a developmental approach in larger institutions. They felt that because most universities attempt to register a large number of students in a short period of time, faculty advisors are generally the ones who are expected to give students correct information, mainly about programs, majors, prerequisites, course sequences, course

content, and course availability. But the outcome, they believed, was usually only a program of advising held together largely by the major and distribution requirements of the curriculum. If questions about career goals or personal conflicts arose, the student was likely to be sent elsewhere: to a career placement office or to a counseling center.

Blocher and Rapoza (1981, p. 223), in assessing the needs of today's students, pointed out that counseling approaches for student development that are traditionally housed outside of academics tend to be categorized under the administration of student support services. Because the line between academic and personal counseling is so finely drawn, Blocher and Rapoza felt that it was a mistake to group counseling services with clinical services "which are designed to remedy sickness rather than help students with normal developmental tasks." They believed that there is still a stigma associated with personal counseling services, which may detract from their basic purposes, and that they are sometimes perceived as peripheral agencies, staffed by professionals who are often unfamiliar with academic issues. Blocher and Rapoza's organizational model abandoned this dual approach to student advising and proposed that _all_ student development programs be directly and clearly associated with academic departments. "The effort should not be to 'reach out' from a separate structure but to 'reach in' to the

mainstream of campus activity . . ." However, a more recent survey of developmental academic advising (Winston, Miller, Ender, & Grites, 1984, p. 17) cautioned that "academic advising is not personal counseling." Although they believed that effective advising included aspects of students' academic as well as personal lives, they made a definite distinction between academic and therapeutic counseling, citing the lack of experience, knowledge, and skills of most counselors as the reason for doing so. Most institutions tend to assume that a distinction _should_ be made between academic and nonacademic counseling. The feeling is that specialized departments are more knowledgable in specific areas and more efficient in overall operation.

Developmental models of advising have been available to the academic community for a number of years. Unfortunately, typical academic advising programs are primarily concerned with the mechanics of getting a degree: graduation requirements, schedule changes, course selection, basic information-processing, and numerous clerical functions that are performed by various personnel, including advising specialists, faculty members, professional counselors, and trained paraprofessionals, generally operating through a centralized staff (Grites, 1977). Thomas and Chickering (1984) believed that advisors without knowledge of developmental theory tended to view students stereotypically, according to age, sex, race, ethnic origin, socioeconomic class, major area of

study, year in college, test results, geographic origin, and even by body build.

Although the concern for the development of the total student is stated, at least implicitly, in almost all college and university viewbooks and catalogs, many educators believed that this concern was primarily "lip service," at best (Cross, 1980; Ender, Winston, & Miller, 1982). Because of the increasing compartmentalization of college and university faculty, staff, and administrators (McHenry, 1977), and the dual approach to the counseling of students which institutions typically adopt (Ender, Winston, & Miller, 1982), the result is a lack of the integration of personal and intellectual development, to which nearly all institutions ascribe as an important part of their statement of mission and goals.

Delivery Systems of Academic Advising

Faculty Advising.

Faculty members have historically assumed the primary responsibility for advising students. In the early days, they offered students educational guidance as well as financial help, health supervision, keeping personnel records, and sending reports home to parents. Such guidance existed informally and was tacitly accepted as one of the responsibilities that each instructor was expected to perform (Hardee, 1959).

According to Fisch (1978), with the advent of science

and technology in the latter part of the 19th century, the character of student-faculty relationships substantially changed. From teachers and guides, instructors became academicians, whose knowledge was increasingly compartmentalized and technical. In this new role, supervision of student character development was rejected as an appropriate responsibility. Research and writing took precedence, instead. Because faculty members are encouraged to believe, especially in larger institutions, that increased research activity will bring more prestige and therefore more personal rewards, they spend less time being concerned with student needs (Borgard et al., 1977).

Despite the focus on research, faculty members continue to be the primary mode of delivery for academic advising. Crockett and Levitz (1984) found this to be true in 80% of the institutions they surveyed. It is assumed by many institutions that faculty members are the most appropriate group in a higher education setting to provide advice and guidance to students regarding basic academic information, since faculty members are presumed to be the closest to academics by virtue of their profession. Further, this type of advising usually represents the most financially feasible method of providing the service (Crockett, 1982), since typically, there are no monetary or time compensations for the faculty members who are involved. It has been recognized by increasing numbers of educational administrators, however,

that administrative recognition of the importance of academic advising is required to justify the time which faculty members spend at the task (Crockett & Levitz, 1984).

Many institutions continue to believe the research that shows that faculty members are especially important in the advising function, because they have considerable influence on students' occupational decisions and continued education. They are found to be particularly crucial in the decision of students to become teachers (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969). Astin's (1977, p. 223) longitudinal study of student development revealed that "student-faculty interaction has a stronger relationship to student satisfaction with the college experience than any other involvement variable . . ." Where institutional size and complexity are considered to be negative factors in student development, faculty members were felt to have a special responsibility to humanize their relationships with students to the fullest extent possible. While not expected to deal with radical personality or emotional factors, faculty members were expected "to provide . . . some guidelines of value" in the form of reasoned logic or "warm common sense." (Bornheimer, Burns & Dumke, 1973, p. 62).

Cahn (1984) expressed the belief that advising, perhaps more than any other pedagogical task, best reflects the instructors' views of the value and purpose of a college education. He believed that in addition to helping the

student, it benefits faculty members as well, in terms of reaffirming the importance of the work they do.

Crockett (1982) felt that although it is assumed that faculty members are the logical choices for the preponderance of academic advising done in colleges and universities, schools must carefully consider the aspects of academic advising before taking this assumption as a "given." Hardee (1959, p. 50) expressed a concern regarding the selection criteria of faculty members for advising, the least useful one being, "Well, Professor Drydock might as well counsel. We can't seem to fill up his classes and he ought to have something to take up his time." According to Crockett and Levitz (1984), only 11% of institutions employed any type of selection process in determining faculty members who were qualified to advise students. Hardee (1959) felt that the only respectable criteria for use in the selection of faculty advisors are those concerned with the interest of the faculty member in advising, the ability to deal with students in a one-to-one relationship, and the willingness to spend some time learning the fundamentals of the counseling responsibility.

Many faculty members express a reluctance to take on advising responsibilities, not from a lack of interest or time, but because of the often ambiguous nature of the process itself. Crookson (1972) believed that faculty members and students have very different opinions regarding

the function of faculty advising, and that the exact parameters of the role of faculty advisors are typically not established in most schools. Borgard et al. (1977) found that many faculty advisors still viewed the student as the follower of advice, and stated:

> Unless relevant information can be directed to sources interfacing with the information-seeker, the activities of developing, acquiring, and disseminating information become pointless. Special attention should be directed to problems of credibility, contradictions and diffusion. Without a minimum of easily obtained and understandable advising information, the possibility of developing faculty advising to a high level would be adversely affected. (p. 9)

As early as 1958, Robertson saw the importance of strategic planning with faculty advisors, for the purpose of achieving maximum benefit. He criticized advising programs that treated the faculty as little more than "co-opted clerks," and dealt with the mechanics of course selection and graduation requirements, rather than with more significant issues of student decision-making. Moore (1976), 18 years later, found that essentially the same situation continued to exist, and that the most frequently discussed topics in advising sessions were still registration, course selection, and graduation requirements. Hardee (1959) discovered that faculty advisors at most institutions were learning advising "on the student" and that most in-service training was so informal as to be judged of little worth (pp. 84-85). Polson and Jurich (1979, p. 249-250), in a comparable study, found that "despite its frequent utilization by students, few stu-

dents actually found the overall advising services to be useful," because few faculty advisors appeared to explore fully the potential of the student as a whole.

Hardee (1970) viewed faculty advising as a tridimensional activity consisting of (1) discerning the purposes of the institution in its teaching-learning mission; (2) perceiving the purposes of student learners; and (3) promoting these possibilities in conference with student learners. "The faculty adviser (sic) here is considered to be a coordinator of learning experiences for students." (p. 9).

Although Borgard et al. (1977) stated that attempting to be all things to a student within the typical academic structure of teaching, research, and service can lead to less than adequate advising, Hardee (1970, pp. 14-16) believed that with adequate planning, a program of advising involving faculty members could be successful. Among her suggestions were (1) the crucial need for administrative support, both psychological and fiscal; (2) rewards for faculty members who advise, equal to the recognition of those who do research or publish, in the form of monetary or other compensation; (3) periodic in-service professional training for faculty advisors, both formal and informal; (4) careful selection of faculty advisors and clear-cut statements which outline both the general and specific responsibilities of advisors; and (5) close cooperation between faculty advisors and professional counselors.

Grites (1979) believed that students must also take on certain responsibilities when working with faculty advisors, and that they cannot realistically expect their advisors to know every intricate policy, regulation, procedure, and rule in fine detail. He stated that for the student to accept an advisor's advice without question was to abdicate responsibility. Some of the specific behaviors that he felt students should demonstrate included making appointments at other than peak advising periods, keeping scheduled appointments, being prepared for appointments with as much information as possible, keeping their own records, meeting deadlines, and providing complete and accurate information about themselves, their plans, and their choices.

Regardless of the mode of academic advising utilized, most institutions state in their college catalogs and bulletins that it is the overall responsibility of students to meet the requirements for graduation.

Advisement Centers.

Although the most common delivery system for academic advising is the faculty, centralized advising is being utilized as a more efficient system in many institutions today.

Central advising centers were first introduced during the late 1950s as a response to the increased college enrollment and increased faculty interest in research and

publication (and subsequent decreased interest in advising). First pioneered by community colleges through the use of counseling center personnel, the advisement center evolved as a more comprehensive repository of information, monitor of student concerns, and internal referral and support system (Grites, 1979). Carstensen and Silberhorn (1979) found that centralized advising by professional advisors was the most frequently used advising delivery system after faculty advising. Citing the advantages of this system, Crockett (1982) included the fact that as members of a centralized staff, such advisors were free from academic department biases, which were often apparent among faculty advisors. Further, professional counselors had the prerequisite training and skills that faculty generally did not have. Hardee (1970) found the overall coordination through a central office to be especially helpful to students who were undecided about a major. Other types of students often served by a central office include all new freshmen, students on academic probation, and those students not seeking a degree (Grites, 1979).

Siewert (1975) saw the Academic Counseling Center as an innovative approach to meeting academic, personal, and vocational planning needs of university students. This concept combined the functions of centralized academic advising and personal counseling, with the unique incorporation of personnel from academic units working with traditional counseling

personnel. The personal as well as the academic needs of students would be met by counselors and advisors, who would be able to respond to all levels of personal, vocational, and academic decision-making. Inherent to the center's operation was a system resembling a team counseling situation of internal referral to assure that the students met with the staff members most competent to deal with their particular concerns.

Bonar and Mahler (1974) and Polson and Jurich (1979) agreed that a well-designed advisement center can provide a designated area where students can go to receive from specially trained personnel, including peers, more intensive advising in goal setting, in career exploration, and in decision-making. The student would be assured of receiving accurate information from a single, reliable source, and would be aided in planning a program individually tailored to his or her own needs.

Crockett (1982) disclosed some difficulties associated with the centralized advisement approach. First, he felt that if professional counselors were used, some of the staff might, as a result of their training and background, appear more interested in psychological or therapeutic counseling and less in academic advising. Second, he believed that in large institutions using only a central office for advising, the sheer numbers of students might make advising difficult by a small staff. Third, there is often a lack of knowledge

by central staff members of specific course content, departmental requirements, and career opportunities in specific fields--information which faculty members may be in a better position to provide.

A number of large, comprehensive institutions have assumed that a centralized advising system is appropriate because of their size and organizational structure. It is seen as the most efficient way to coordinate adequately large numbers of programs and requirements for a highly diverse student population.

Student Advisors.

The concept of using students, especially upperclassmen and graduate students, as peer helpers has had a long tradition in higher education. Recently, schools have begun to utilize this group even more, as a supplement to faculty and professional academic advising (Crockett, 1982). Although Carstensen and Silberhorn (1979) reported that at least 50% of schools using peer advisors paid them a salary, the amount was much less than a professional serving a similar function would be paid.

Using students for advising often opens channels of communication among students, faculty, and administrators, and provides students with leadership experience (Grites, 1979). Students advising students allows for an atmosphere of awareness and empathy based on common interests and experiences associated with an institutional environment. At

the same time, this process frees faculty members and professional advisors to spend more time dealing with developmental programs and more in-depth advising (Delworth, Sherwood & Casaburri, 1974).

Peer advisors have been found to be effective in reducing attrition, improving study habits, and improving academic performance (Upcraft, 1971). Some student advisor programs are based in freshmen residence halls. According to Deutsch, Rogers, and Hart (1977), the philosophy behind this approach was based on the fact that since residence hall advisors live with their advisees, they would be in a position to develop a friendly and personal rapport and have many opportunities for informal contacts and conferences. The authors felt that one particular attribute of this type of student advising was the special attention given to freshmen at a very complicated and vulnerable period of their college lives, a time when attrition is most likely to occur.

Brown and Myers (1975) compared the academic progress of students advised by students with that of students advised by faculty and found that student advisors were generally responded to more favorably. Student advisors were thought to be more sympathetic than faculty advisors, who were seen as administrators going through a formal process. Faculty advisors tended either to make more of the decisions for the student, or leave the decisions totally to the student. In a major study of college students' perceptions of the higher

education experience, DeCoster and Mable (1981, pp. 43-44) found that students frequently described the idea of approaching one of their instructors as "scary, threatening, or demeaning . . . "

Student advisors, on the other hand, seemed to treat the advising situation as more of a joint effort. Brown and Myers found that even though there was no difference between student-advised and faculty-advised groups on grade point average, they did report a significantly lower attrition rate for student-advised freshmen.

Zultowski and Catron (1976) found no significant differences in academic performance, retention of students, or a more satisfying college experience among students advised by their peers and those advised by faculty or others. The results of their study indicated that student advisors may be effective, but in a different capacity from that of faculty or other advisors. Student advisors seemed to provide more experiential information, whereas faculty advisors seemed better able to provide factual academic information. Given the data in their study, they concluded that the best type of undergraduate advising would probably be one which combined the services of both faculty and student advisors.

Hutchins and Miller (1979) described a faculty-student advisement project with freshmen students in a group setting. The aim of the program was to counsel the whole student, and trained faculty members were used along with student peer

helpers. Their results suggested that such a group process can assist in overcoming certain limitations of more traditional faculty advisement by expanding the range of topics that may be addressed. In effect, a basic reference group was created in which students could share their ideas, feelings, and concerns with both peers and significant others before these concerns became crisis situations.

Crockett (1979) pointed out that there were several disadvantages to peer advising, and that institutions considering such an approach must take into consideration the transient nature of students. Just as they gained experience and developed their skills in advising, they would be ready to graduate, and new students must be trained to take their place. He mentioned that a second drawback was that most students did not possess the skills, experiences, or background to deal with more complicated issues and problems which may arise, and professional or faculty advisement must be available to provide answers which students could not deal with. Crockett, however, stated that the disadvantages may be overcome by careful selection, training, and supervision of those students involved in a peer advising program.

Computer-Assisted Advising.

The obvious advantage of the use of computers in academic advising is the efficient and effective support service it can lend to academic advisors. Grites (1979)

listed as several specific uses the verification of graduation requirements, identification of students in academic difficulty, and demographic and course information retrieval. In addition, computers can reduce repetitious, clerical record-keeping tasks, allowing advisors more time to spend with students (White, Harvey, & Kethley, 1978; Crockett, 1982). It should be noted, however, that most authors who offered this technique for use in academic advising considered it to be an effective supplement, and not a replacement for personal advising (Moseley, 1977; Grites, 1979).

Summary

The review of the literature on academic advising appeared to present perspectives which generally precluded the points of view of students. Although much of the research was student-centered, issues were approached primarily on behalf of students; suggestions and recommendations were made for improvements that would directly affect them. This gave the impression that students were an integral part of the overall process, but failed to involve them pesonally, in ways that were meaningful to their academic experiences.

Further research may need to focus on the perspectives of students, in order that they may share in some of the decisions about what is best for them academically. Basically, someone else appears to be making those decisions for them.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Setting of the Study

The study took place on the campus of a large university in the southeastern United States. Because of the sensitive nature of the research, and because the name of the university was irrelevant to the purpose of the study, the school will be referred to in this dissertation as the University of the Carolinas (U of C).

Established in the late 1800's, the institution changed from a small college, with an enrollment of approximately 200, to a state-supported university, with a 1984 enrollment of over 10,000 students. Seven degree programs are currently offered in approximately 90 fields of study. Because of its diversity of programs and size of the student body, academic advising for undergraduates is coordinated through a central office located in the Administration Building, which also houses the offices for Student Services, Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Affairs, Graduate School, Adult Students, Registrar, and assorted business offices.

The Administration Building is a modern-looking brick structure. The center of the interior of the building has been left open from floor to ceiling; skylights overhead and small trees and plants, planted in large, square, garden-like areas, give a further impression of openness. The offices

are situated on the periphery of this large, open area, and to add to the feeling of openness, there are no doors to the reception areas of each office, except on the second floor.

The primary mode of academic advising is by members of the teaching faculty, who are selected for the role by the chairmen of each academic department, by a process determined by every department individually. Although advising is purportedly a voluntary function, very few faculty members are exempt from the duty. The average advisee load is 15-20 students; however, that figure is misleading, when each department is examined individually. According to central office records, the largest advisee load is 109 students, assigned to two different teaching faculty members in one of the most popular programs of study on campus. Five other faculty members in that department, who also teach full time, advise over 45 students each.

Faculty advisors currently receive no specialized training to help them in their advising duties. At the beginning of the fall semester each year, a general meeting for new faculty advisors introduces them to such elementary facts as minimum and maximum course loads, total hours necessary for graduation, which courses are available for which students by status, grade requirements in the major fields of study, and the availablity of other referral services, such as the Student Counseling Center for personal counseling, and the Career Placement Office. Both are

located in other buildings on campus. Each faculty advisor receives a listing of advisees, including their year in school and academic deficiencies, if any. Except for a current university catalog, a desk calendar with pertinent registration and drop/add dates, and a second short meeting for those with specific questions, advisors receive no additional training or handbook of instructions or policies. The last handbook for advisors, printed in 1980, was felt by the Dean of Academic Advising to be an unncessary expense, by virtue of the fact that he believed that faculty advisors did not read it. Faculty advising duties typically include the approval and signing of students' registration cards; assistance with students' course selections, especially in their major fields of study; approval for dropping or adding courses; and any other academic problems relating to students' courses and requirements.

In addition to serving as faculty advisors for students in their own area of specialization, one faculty advisor per university school (e.g. School of Music, School of Business, School of Education, etc.) serves as a general academic advisor in the central Office of Academic Advising for a period of five hours per week. The central office budget provides a semester stipend for each faculty member who serves; this is paid to the university school in which the faculty member works, in order to arrange for release time, if necessary (e.g. hiring a substitute teacher on the days in

which the faculty member serves in the central office). Because of the limited time and/or interest of many faculty members, graduate students from the various schools often assume these duties instead, and are sometimes paid a small salary from the release-time allowance. For the 1984-85 academic year, there are five student advisors and four faculty advisors serving part time in the Office of Academic Advising.

Training for part-time academic advisors in the Office of Academic Advising is minimal and consists of reading the university bulletin, sitting in on the advising sessions of full-time staff members, and asking questions as they arise. There are few guidelines available, and advisors are obliged to learn advising "on the student." These part-time advisors are mainly concerned with answering specific questions about courses and requirements, interpreting the catalog, and referring the student to other departments when necessary. Although there is a fine line drawn between academic counseling and personal counseling, the guideline for advisors is to stay within academic boundaries, and to leave other counseling to the professional staff in the Counseling Center, located in the Student Health Center.

The central academic advising staff is composed of six full-time advisors and five full-time clerical staff members. The Dean of Academic Advising is considered to be part time, since he is also a member of the teaching faculty. Only one

of the full-time advisors has a background in counseling; the others have degrees in educational psychology, home economics, Spanish, English, and business education. One staff member also serves as an advisor for handicapped students.

The basic functions of the Office of Academic Advising are listed below:

1. keeping all student records, including applications, grades, copies of transcripts, and audit sheets for checking graduation requirements;

2. providing degree audits on request for students who desire to know where they stand with regard to requirements for graduation;

3. assigning students to appropriate faculty advisors based on the declared major of the student;

4. coordinating and keeping account of the university and college requirements, along with those of each academic department;

5. changing students' majors or advisors on request;

6. advising students on course selection and scheduling;

7. keeping a record of and notifying by mail all students on academic probation, or those with any deficiencies to be removed;

8. sending out written notices of academic suspension to students, based on poor grades or non-attendance at class;

9. processing letters of appeal for those students on

academic probation or suspension;

10. keeping track of all academic regulations, and interpreting the catalog requirements for both students and faculty members;

11. approving schedules of students wishing to take more than 15 semester hours of classwork;

12. approving consortium coursework or transferable courses that the student might wish to take at another institution;

13. processing the papers of students wishing to withdraw from the university.

In addition, several times during the academic year, the office sponsors workshops on various topics, e.g. on the selection of a major and exam preparation. The office is also involved with freshman registration and orientation in conjunction with the Admissions Office.

In 1984, responding to a directive from the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, the staff of the Office of Academic Advising composed the following Mission and Goals Statement, to run through 1991:

a. To coordinate a well-defined advising system which ensures that all undergraduate students achieve breadth in an education that is firmly based in the liberal arts.

b. To promote the highest standards of excellence of the undergraduate professional schools by thoroughly preparing all advisors in their advising responsibilities.

c. To promote advisor-advisee interaction for the purpose of stimulating excellence in teaching

and enhancing faculty-student relationships.

d. To sponsor varied academic activities both on and off campus which stimulate productive and high quality research, scholarship, and creative expression.

e. To maintain inter-school and inter-departmental communications to enhance a strong sense of community and to encourage the development of distinctive University programs.

f. To serve the people of the State by engaging in the activities and challenges described in the aforementioned and to promote understanding of the resulting mutual benefits.

According to the Dean of Academic Advising, these statements also characterize the philosophy of the advising office.

The above Mission and Goals Statement was written and sent to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, but was not circulated among the advising faculty nor among the part-time advisors in the central office. A copy, however, was placed in the reserve section of the library.

Although there are no special awards for excellence in advising, a student club on campus occassionally recognizes and cites honorary members among faculty members and advisors for outstanding service. The award is given only to those who display "special service" beyond the general descriptions of their jobs. To date, two members of the Office of Academic Advising have been so honored.

Method of Inquiry: A Phenomenological Approach

Psychology and sociology have typically focused on observable behavior, "ignoring the thoughts and intentions that

give meaning to that behavior." (Kneller, 1984, p. 30). But there is no way of perceiving meaning, either in oneself or in another human being, except through "a subjective inner certainty that dissolves as soon as it is attacked with the tools of scientific analysis." (Berger, 1963).

Max Weber always emphasized the subjective meanings, intentions, and interpretations brought into any social situation by the actors. Weber also pointed out that what eventually happens in society may be very different from what the actors meant, but he indicated that this entire subjective dimension must be taken into consideration for an acceptable sociological understanding (Berger, 1963).

This study attempted to go beyond dialogue and used phenomenological methods in order to draw inferences and bring out underlying assumptions from in-depth interviews. In many instances, these assumptions were unstated or taken for granted by the subjects. Because students are most affected by the policies of educational systems, it was their perspectives which were examined. The interviews with them were recorded and transcribed, in order for the researcher to become as completely and personally involved as possible with the subjects' feelings and experiences. Recurring themes were elicited through repeated listening to the tapes and readings of the transcripts.

According to Kneller (1984), the ultimate purpose of phenomenological investigation is to describe the major

concepts through which people structure their experiences. Rist (1982) further stated that a qualitative perspective would lead the investigator in different directions than those based on experimental methods.

> Rather than presuming that human environments and interactions can be held constant, manipulated, treated, scheduled, modified, or extinguished, qualitative research posits that the most powerful and parsimonious way to understand human beings is to watch, talk, listen, and participate with them in their own natural settings. (p. 440).

Essentially, the focus of interest of research which is phenomenological in nature is on the ways in which different individuals experience, interpret, and structure their lives. Using this perspective, it is essential to gather statements made by the participants with a view to examining the various dimensions of the situations that they construct. In order to do this, "one would have to take the role of the actor and see his world from his standpoint." (Burgess, 1984, p. 542). Donmoyer (1980) metaphorically compared researchers who attempt to portray the circular experiences of people to an artist painting a picture.

> The evaluator as artist . . . utilizes artistic symbols and artistic form to communicate those aspects of the educational process that traditional evaluators and even most ethnographers ignore; the qualities extant in a particular educational experience, or . . . the qualities of curricular experience as values both intrinsically and because they impact on future growth. (p. 16).

At the same time phenomenological researchers attempt to understand the experiences and feelings of the participants,

they are also endeavoring to "create meaning and evoke an understanding of events" from an audience by "providing concepts useful in making sense of what transpired." Interpretation functions, then, to facilitate the "conveying to readers of the nature of the phenomena explored . . . " (McCutcheon, 1981, p. 6). According to McCutcheon,

> The audience can compare the study to what they personally know--through practical experience, reading and their own research. When an audience agrees with the researcher, in a sense they multiplicatively corroborate the study . . . Because of intersubjectivity, an audience reading an interpretive study personally generalizes from what is being read to their own case. While certain aspects of the setting or characteristics of the participants may differ from those of an audience, the audience may be able to generalize from parts of the study to their own situations. The researcher shares perceptions, biases and facts and reeducates the audience intersubjectively. . . . Generalizability in interpretive studies, then, rests on the assumption of the intersubjectivity of interpretations and readers' ability (sic) to generalize personally to their own situations rather than on the researchers' generalizing to populations larger than the sample used in a particular study. (pp. 8-9).

Alternative suggestions for academic advising were not the intended outcome of this study. It was felt that by proposing practical options, "it shifts the focus of criticism of what exists to the proposed alternative," and "the original criticisms of the existing problems are ultimately ignored." (Perkinson, 1971, p. 14) It was considered to be more important to listen and to react to what the students were saying, in order to assess the validity of the assumptions made regarding academic advising.

Selection of Subjects

The subjects interviewed for this study included a selected sample of students who have attended or were attending the university. In order to provide a set of diverse profiles, eight full-time and part-time students of different ages, from divergent ethnic, social, geographic, and racial backgrounds were included. Their diversity and their experiences as undergraduate students at the university were the only criteria for their selection. It was not felt that these students were "special" or "atypical," except in their own uniqueness as individuals. They were selected only by virtue of their knowledge of and experiences in the university setting. The validity of a sampling of this size lies in the strength of the personal involvement of each student with the university's academic advising process, and the experiences of each were analyzed in relationship to the six assumptions stated about academic advising in Chapter I.

Data Collection

Information was collected from the following sources:

1. Interviews and discussions with selected students.
2. Unpublished memoranda and handbooks from the Office of Academic Advising;
3. 1984-85 University Bulletin;
4. Discussions with the staff in the Office of Academic Advising;

5. Observations by the researcher as a student and as an academic advisor in the Office of Academic Advising;

6. 1984-85 Student Handbook.

The main source of data for this study was the in-depth interviews with selected students. A general profile of each student was made a part of the study, and included age, sex, ethnic background, status in school, home town, full-time or part-time status, academic major and minor, and whether he or she lived on campus or commuted. The primary focus of the interviews was their personal feelings and perspectives regarding the overall academic advising that they had experienced at the university.

Three data collection strategies were used in formulating this research: observation, interviewing, and analysis. Because of the unstructured nature of the interviews, the following questions were intended to be used only as guidelines and were altered, based on each student's background and experiences. The importance of stressing the conversational aspects of the interview was to reinforce the idea that qualitative work involves "considerable human interaction." (Rist, 1982, p. 443).

1. How did you select your major? Did anyone at the university help you make this decision?

2. Did you ever change majors? If so, why? Did anyone at the university assist you in making the change?

3. How much assistance have you had in planning your

courses? Who was the most help?

4. Are you satisfied with the amount of autonomy you have had in selecting your general coursework? In selecting your major coursework?

5. Have you found these courses to be relevant?

6. Have you ever considered submitting a Plan II (self-prepared) program of study? Why or why not?

7. How much help do you feel the university catalog has been?

8. When you first came to the campus, what preconceived ideas about academic advising did you have? How have the realities been different?

9. How much help has your faculty advisor been?

10. What are your feelings about the central Office of Academic Advising? Why have you gone to the office? How helpful have they been?

11. Has the size of the institution or the student body presented a problem to you? If so, explain.

12. How do you feel about the statement printed in the university bulletin that it is the ultimate responsbility of the student to meet all requirements for graduation? Have you had the information necessary to accomplish this?

13. How would you evaluate the overall effectiveness of academic advising at this university?

The interviews were largely conducted in the university library; it was felt that a setting familiar to the students

would make them more comfortable and more relaxed during the procedure.

CHAPTER IV

INTERVIEWS

Introduction

The eight students selected for participation in this study were unknown to me personally. The criterion I used for their selection was specifically their status as undergraduate students in the university in which the study was done. In one case, a graduate student was interviewed, but since he had attended the university during the previous four years as an undergraduate, I felt that his inclusion in the study was justifiable. In several cases, I made contact with students through my position as advisor in the Office of Academic Advising; in other instances, I was given names of students by acquaintances; several other students were called randomly on the telephone and asked to participate in the study. To the best of my knowledge, none of the students who participated knew each other.

When I contacted the students, I was looking for diversity more than anything else. I felt that it would be valuable to the study to select students of different races, from different ethnic backgrounds, both males and females, students from large cities as well as from small towns, students with different majors, and of different ages. The only students who were rejected for participation in the study were those who seemed too similar to the other students

already interviewed. Students were not selected because they did or did not have a particular complaint or a particular experience or problem. When I first contacted the students, I had little or no idea of their actual experiences in the university.

Originally, it had been my intention to interview twelve students, and from those twelve, select the best eight for presentation in this paper. However, since each, in his or her own way, told a powerful story about the student's very real experiences at the university, all eight students who were interviewed were included in the study.

Initially, most of the students who consented to be interviewed appeared to be nervous; they did not know me, nor did they fully comprehend the way in which I was going to use the information they were giving me. All were releived to hear that their names would not be used; several had to be assured more than once that only the first initial of their first names would appear in the paper. Nearly all of the students were concerned about possible repercussions to themselves, and for several, this uneasiness seemed to persist throughout the interview as they struggled to remember not to use the names of friends, faculty, advisors, or administrators. Those who mentioned specific names asked for assurance that those names would not be used in the study. Although their uneasiness was often apparent, I have no doubt that the responses from these students were their honest and

sincere feelings and beliefs.

I chose the library as the setting for the interviews; there are small typing rooms on each floor, and with the door closed, it was virtually soundproof to students studying in the next room. I felt that the library represented a neutral environment, a place with which the students were familiar and comfortable; besides that, it was a good central location for students to reach in short time before or after classes. In two instances, it was more convenient for the student to meet in another location. One student preferred to talk in his own apartment; another asked to be interviewed in an empty room where she worked, so that she would not have to take off time from her job.

It was interesting to me to note the surprise expressed by most of the students to be asked to participate in a study of this nature. They gave me the impression that they did not think anyone was interested in what they had to say. Several students verbally expressed the feeling that since they were students, the information they were giving me would probably get no farther than my dissertation committee; however, all appeared hopeful that someone "of importance" might read of their experiences and initiate some necessary improvements in the academic advising system.

I enjoyed immensely talking with each student and listening to their stories. Surprisingly, every student who participated in the study thanked me after the interview

ended, and told me how much they, too, had enjoyed the conversation. In a way, their talking was a catharsis for them; the telling of their stories often conjured up their anger or their disappointments, and "griping" to me, as they referred to it, seemed somehow to make them feel a little better. In addition, several of the students who initially said that they had no real complaints about advising, found by the end of the interview that they were not as satisfied as they had previously believed. It was through our conversation that they began to take a closer look at their experiences.

I feel that I gained a great deal from listening to the students, as well. In my job as an academic advisor, I discovered that I now tried to look at each student as an individual with special interests, abilities, and needs. Because it was a repeated complaint that academic advisors were "professional" to the point of working with students just long enough to solve problems, I found myself spending more time with individual students than I did before, often just sitting and talking about the student's plans and experiences in the university. Except for a few students who were in a hurry themselves, nearly all seemed to appreciate the personal attention, even if the time were not spent discussing a particular problem.

As an unexpected outcome of the interviews, in several instances, I was able to use my knowledge as an academic advisor to explain some facts or share some bit of informa-

tion with the students, and in that way, answer some of their questions and fill in some of the missing gaps in their knowledge of academics in the university.

The questions that I asked the students were open-ended. I asked for feelings and opinions; I asked them to tell me, in their own words, the experiences that they had had with their faculty advisors, with the advisors in the Office of Academic Advising, with instructors, and with staff members in the university. I wanted to know if they were helped, how they were helped, or how they were not helped. I asked for their reactions and their assessments. The list of questions (see Chapter III) was used only as guidelines, and was changed and added to according to each student's personal background and experiences.

Following are the stories of eight university students.

Interview with "R"

R. was a soft-spoken, articulate white male, aged 23, from a large, metropolitan city in North Carolina, who received his undergraduate degree from U of C in 1983 in drama, with a concentration in acting and directing. His interest in this field dates back to junior high school, and he was extremely excited and honored after he had auditioned and was selected along with 11 other high school students for inclusion into this program at U of C in the fall of 1979. Convinced by the school's recruiters that the drama department at U of C was one of the best in the area, R., an honors student in high school, was determined to work hard in order to get the most out of his educational experience.

R. quickly found that his expectations of college were somewhat different from the reality. His first doubts began to surface regarding the required coursework related to his major:

> The way it's laid out, it's so incredibly strict the way my program is set up, the major requirements and the required electives. I was required to take 23 hours of elective classes. It's so strict that if you do not follow it almost exactly the way it's set up, then there's no way you can get out in four years. I wish my degree program was more flexible. I wish I could have felt like I could have taken an extra 3 hours here and there. I was paying for it, but I was paying for exactly what _they_ wanted me to take.

After reflecting on the incongruency of the drama department's "required electives," R. added that he felt that many of the required courses were "totally inappropriate" to

his degree program. Two courses he particularly singled out as being so were "Media for the Stage," and "Improvisations and Dance," taught by the dance department.

> "Media for the Stage" and "Improvisations and Dance" are so out of the field of acting, that my ability was not up for competing with the dancers that were in there. I think it was two poor choices for a BFA major, especially for those who had to do some serious re-working because of a physical handicap.

Besides the courses being unsuitable for his major, he found that there was an additional difficulty with regard to the attitudes of the instructors:

> I went into that class, and the first day of class the teacher told us that no theater student has ever made an A in the class. And you start from there.

Outside of his major program of study, R. indicated that it appeared to him that the university and college course requirements were set up for the students to fit into, and not to fit the students' needs, interests, or abilities. He saw this as a basic lack of confidence that schools have in their students to be involved in making decisions concerning their own programs of study. And he felt that students passively resist this lack of autonomy by taking courses that are "easy."

> I feel like any school does not trust the ability of the student to make up his own mind. I guess the assumption is that if they don't require you to take a certain number of humanities or social sciences that you're going to take golf or bowling for all those hours and get credit for it . . . Where they said I had to take 6 hours of natural science and math, you'll notice I took Math 112. In high school, I took calculus. But because I <u>had</u> to

> get a math requirement, I took the easiest math they offered. What I'm saying is because I was required to take these courses, I took the easiest ones that I knew, that I could get over with and just get out of. And I think if I was not required, I could have taken something that would have challenged me, or something that was interesting to me. I think most of these classes that I picked were classes that I knew I could just knock off.

R. said that he tried to do everything he was required to do in order to earn his degree in four years, but that regardless of his intentions, he still experienced difficulties because of inadequate advising. Again, his actual experiences did not live up to his original expectations:

> I thought that my advisor would be a person that would have knowledge of when it would be appropriate for you to take what course, what level, what courses should be taken in what year. When do I need to get these in, that kind of thing. The advisors I had were very friendly and very personal, but none of them seemed concerned over what classes I was taking. It was pretty much like, "Well, what classes have you signed up for this semester?" And I would tell them, and they would say, "Oh, that sounds good."

Although disappointed in the lack of concern for or knowledge of course requirements that his advisors seemed to exhibit, R. believed that there were reasons for this. Part of it, he felt was a lack of communication between the department heads and faculty members. He also felt that faculty advisors assumed that students, along with the help of the university catalog and the outline of required courses handed out by the major department, should assume the major responsibility for taking the right courses at the right times.

> They just felt like we knew what we were doing

> more than _they_ knew what _they_ were doing, thinking that we got the answers to questions from the course outline, the catalog. They seemed to feel like we knew what we were doing, we knew what we wanted to take, and their job was only to approve it.

Even when an advisor would spend extra time with him going over his program, R. felt that the result was still the same:

> I don't even think if they'd given more time to the guidance that they knew what to do. I don't think they're aware of the schedules. I don't think if they sat down and worked with me for 15 minutes that they would even know what to suggest to me. I liked my advisors, but they didn't help me very much.

In R.'s case, neither the university catalog nor the department's outline of courses alerted him to the fact that several required courses in his major were offered only during alternate semesters.

> I was supposed to take World Theater I and World Theater II. Those were both required for my major, but they were only offered every other fall semester. So it came to be the second semester of my junior year, and I signed up for the World Theater I in the fall, and found that I couldn't take World Theater II in the spring. Because I wasn't advised to take that a year earlier, there was no way I could get it in before graduation.

Since neither the university catalog nor the schedule of course offerings that are published prior to the upcoming semester indicate courses which are only offered in alternate semesters, there was no way for R. to have obtained this information, except verbally from an academic advisor or from his peers who may have had a previous experience with scheduling these courses. According to R., 8 out of the 12

students in his program found this lack of information to be a serious problem. As it was, R. discovered by accident that he was going to be short one class for graduation when he went to the Office of Academic Advising for a degree audit.

> I didn't even know what an audit was until someone said, "Well, you should probably get an audit and see how you're doing." Someone said they had just got their audit done and found out that they had to go [to school] this summer. And so I said, "Well, I didn't know there even was such a thing. I guess I'd better do it." When I got the audit, they took me into a little side room and went over everything and told me what I needed, and scared me to death. [They] said, "You should have gotten this course back then. You should have gotten this your sophomore year. Why didn't you do that, because it's not going to be offered again before you graduate."

R. experienced feelings of anguish and anger when he discovered that despite the fact that he had worked hard to maintain a 3.5 average and had done everything he was told to do, that because he lacked a specific piece of information, he might not graduate on time.

> It's a frightening experience to get that far and then to have to call home and say, "Well, I don't know if I'm going to graduate. Hold off buying the invitations."

The advisor with whom R. spoke in the Office of Academic Advising sent him back to the head of his department to request a course substitution. Even though he felt that he had a good reason for requesting an alternate course, R. found that he had a difficult time getting the waiver and spent some anxious moments waiting for the approval to come

through. He felt that one reason the substitution was finally agreed upon was because of his high grade point average, and that had his average been lower, things may have worked out differently.

R. firmly believed that the lack of information given to students is a kind of power-play, a "deliberate oversight" as a means of delaying students' degrees in order to force them to sign up for additional courses:

> The feelings that I had were that the school would do anything to keep me here another semester. I really felt that way. What I got from the office [of academic advising], even though they were efficient in what they were telling me, I felt like their job was to keep me here another semester. The ultimate goal is to get that money.

In addition to his being short one class for graduation which would not be offered during his last semester, R. was also told by the Office of Academic Advising that he was taking too many 100-level courses during his senior year. (Students are allowed a maximum of 12 credit hours of 100-level courses for their last 60 hours.) Again, he was disturbed because he had not been told this information, and although it was pointed out to him that these regulations were printed in the catalog, he felt angry that it hadn't also been reinforced verbally by someone, if, indeed, it was as significant a requirement as the central advising office made it seem.

> The only time I ever used the catalog was to pick out one of the few unrequired electives I could take. That was the only time I used it, just to see what the course description was. I was given

> this sheet by the department and told, "If you follow this, you're fine." It doesn't go far enough, though . . . If this is so important, then students should be informed in some way. Maybe outlined: "This is the way you should do it. You've got to get all the 100-level courses in." Let them make some suggestions. Let them tell you what year to take what courses, as long as they're telling you what to take, anyway.

R. keenly felt the incongruency between being treated as less than an adult throughout his undergraduate years, unable to plan his own program of study or challenge required courses, and at the same time, being expected to take full responsibility for graduating on time, even though some of the pertinent information he needed to accomplish this had been withheld. Even though the drama department attempted to evaluate each student's program at the end of each year with a "jury" consisting of three faculty members, R. felt it was, at best, a limited exercise.

> It was basically a thing like what gripes do you have. I thought that was pretty good, but that was only departmental. I don't think it really ever got down to course requirements . . . As far as actually suggesting alternative plans, no.

As far as keeping up to date on scheduling and course requirements, R. felt that his faculty advisors and department professors were basically not given enough information, either from the department head or from the Office of Academic Advising. Besides this, he believed that faculty members lacked the motivation necessary to keep up with new information and requirements, and that this was an important factor in the advising process.

> They *could* know. They *should* know. Maybe faculty advisors don't take their job very seriously. They don't have any incentive to. Maybe they should get credit, just like a high school teacher does for coaching.

Even as a graduate student, R. has felt the affects of inadequate academic advising. Currently enrolled in a teacher certification program, he has found once again, that although he has not been misadvised, he has also not been given information which he considers to be crucial for his success.

> In the teacher certification program, they're not really aware of what school systems want. They're not really informed of what's going on out there. [The schools] want me to have a double certification in English. And, of course, my advisor didn't know anything about that. This is a school preference that you can teach English as well as theater, because they don't have enough classes for you to just teach theater all day. The advisors I had were not aware of that. Or if they were aware of it, they didn't get into it.

Throughout his conversations, R. expressed the feelings of frustration and powerlessness that he had experienced throughout the four years he spent at U of C. He felt that he was a good student, but that he could have been better, and he blamed this deficiency on the way he believes students are treated by the university. He cited the lack of trust in students to plan their own programs as a major factor; he knew nothing of the Plan II option, but believed from his personal experiences that even if he had known about it, it would have been very difficult to get approval for a self-planned program of study at U of C. He spoke wistfully about

the courses he would have liked to take, but admitted that with the degree requirements "hanging over his head," and a program of study that left very little room for free electives, he was more conditioned to doing "just enough" in order to finish in four years. R. found that one way to protest the lack of student autonomy, albeit passive, was to take the easiest courses possible that would satisfy the requirements. He wasn't proud of that accomplishment, however, and felt that in the long run, he was the one who was shortchanged by the strategy.

R.'s feelings of powerlessness were also related to his academic advising. While not specifically misadvised, a situation that he could have dealt with more effectively by virtue of the concrete proof he would have had to back up his claims, he was instead faced with the very amorphous quality that characterizes advice that is withheld. Although he was not convinced that the size or bureaucratic structure of U of C was to blame for the oversights, since he was in a program with only 11 other students, he nonetheless compared the attitudes at U of C with those that he encountered at the electric power company. After telephoning the power company in January about a bill that he felt was excessive, he was told that the cold weather was to blame, and that regardless of his suspicions, no one would be sent to his home to check his meter for accuracy. R. spoke of the feelings he experienced in the Administration Building in similar terms:

> I have trouble with the Administration Building--the atmosphere of the offices there. Sterile. The cashiers, the registration, the academic advising. They're all very impersonal . . . they don't want to listen to you. They just want to tell you when you're wrong or that you've done something wrong.

R.'s "catch-22" situation was that he was held accountable for virtually all academic responsibilities for four years, and yet received inadequate follow-up assistance on the pre-determined courses that were made a part of his program of study. He thought that he might have gotten answers to his questions--if only he had known which questions to ask.

Interview with "A"

A. was a very quiet, petite, white female, aged 20, a junior from a small, farm community in North Carolina, majoring in fashion merchandising. As a freshman entering a large university from a small, rural high school, away from home for the first time, A. indicated that she felt overwhelmed by the complex process of acclimating herself to a dynamic, dispassionate environment. Even the selection of her major caused her a great deal of frustration and anxiety, and she thought that the lack of basic guidance was a primary factor.

> I don't think that I had any idea at all what it was going to be like . . . Through high school, I never had to study, and then I came to college and was away from my mother, [and] everybody was drinking beer. I was afraid that there would be nobody to guide me at all. And actually, that's really what happened.

She selected nursing as her first major, and because of her inexperience with college courses, and the negligence of her freshman faculty advisor to carefully examine her course schedule, she mistakenly enrolled in some upper-level classes, which resulted in a grade point average of .75 for her first semester.

> I'm sorry, but that catalog doesn't exactly tell you what you need to have and when you need to have it. Coming into this place, I could think, well, what's the difference between a 500-level and a 100-level course? And be a freshman and try to take a 500-level course, because I have to have it.

This experience discouraged her from continuing as a nursing

major, and feeling somewhat pressured to select another major immediately, yet not knowing who to seek out to help her set her goals, she allowed herself to be influenced by a friend.

> The girl that lived next door to me my freshman year was in fashion merchandising. And she was doing little art stuff, and I thought it was kind of neat. So I checked into it and changed my major to apparel arts, because I thought designing would be the big thing.

Changing majors was extremely easy, requiring her to spend only several minutes giving the information to an advisor in the Office of Academic Advising. Career counseling from that office played no part in the process; it was assumed that she knew what she wanted to do. Once again, a lack of personal guidance from an advisor failed to help her to discover that her newly declared major, apparel arts, was still not the area she was seeking.

> It's like the people there are not interested in telling you where you can go with it. All they do is sign your cards. When I went into apparel arts, the first time I went in, there were 7 or 8 of us in one room, and this lady asked us what year we were. And then she went through and gave us 4 or 5 different handouts about schedules. Required courses that we had to take. "You may want to go with Plan A or Plan B schedule," something like that. And that's all I had to go by.

Finally, while working in a retail clothing store, she found that she was interested in window and clothing displays, and changed her concentration once again; this time, it was to fashion merchandising. Still, she continued to be dissatisfied, this time with her required courses.

> They call my concentration fashion merchandising, and there's one display class offered.

> No merchandising class. No class to tell you different methods of displaying jeans or anything like that. What we get is like the history of costume. We get a lot in textiles and an art history class. And an art class that dealt with colors and spaces. But nothing that I feel really relates to fashion merchandising.

Although she expressed her dissatisfaction with the required courses to her instructors, and believed that they agreed with her observations, no one ever attempted to explain to her the reasons for the variety of generalized courses in her major. As a result, she had a very difficult time synthesizing the information and understanding the relevance to fashion merchandising.

In discussing a Plan II option, which might have offered a program of study more attuned to her interests, A. admitted that although she knew very little about that option, she expressed doubts about the possibility of actually getting such a plan approved without a great many complications and difficulties.

> I've heard of people trying to create their own major. If it was earlier, I would consider doing it, if I had known anything about how to do it or how to go about having it approved. It's just that every time you start something around here, you get the biggest run-around . . . I have never been thrown at so many different people in my life.

A. has had five different faculty advisors and has seen five other advisors in the Office of Academic Advising during her three years at U of C. She felt that it was probably inevitable, then, that getting information from so many different sources would sooner or later result in some conflict-

ing advice. She expressed the feeling that even though she was insecure with her own counsel, it may have been to her advantage overall if she had simply relied on her department handout of requirements and used her own common sense.

> Up until I guess last semester, I was doing things on my own, and when I got an audit and started trying to really make sure I was doing everything right so I could get out of here on time, everything messed up.

Like many students, until she accidentally overheard some other students talking about it, she had no idea of what a course audit was.

> Basically, I couldn't remember what classes I failed my freshman year, [so I went to the central office]. And I wanted to have it listed to see which ones I had had, and where I stood. A couple of times, I had been over there when people had said, "I need an audit." I think what actually happened, I asked my boyfriend what an audit was.

It was her attempt to "do things right" that led to what A. considered to be a very serious problem. After requesting and receiving a course audit, she discovered two additional required courses on the list which she had known nothing about: an accounting course and a business course. Her best source of information seemed to be other students, who insisted that the two courses in question were incorrectly listed on her audit sheet.

> Everybody that came in on the same book that I did kept saying, "A., why are you taking that? You don't have to have it." But I thought I did, since my faculty advisor approved it, and the academic advisor [in the central office] told me I had to have it. It was on that [audit] sheet.

By comparing her department handout with the audit sheet, she

located the discrepancy, and returned with her audit sheet to the Office of Academic Advising in order to have an advisor double check the information. Once again, she was told that the accounting and business courses were required, and believing the advisor to be the "expert," she signed up for both courses. Her faculty advisor, assuming that the word of the central office superseded that of the the fashion merchandising department, approved A.'s course selection.

A. was never totally satisfied with the two courses, but felt that she probably would have tried to complete them, had she found them to be interesting to her personally or relevant to her major. However, she found the courses, especially accounting, to be not only uninteresting and unrelated to fashion merchandising, but very difficult for her, as well. Her friends urged her to seek the advice of the Office of Academic Advising once again; this time, she asked specifically that the audit sheet be checked against the 1982 catalog, the year in which she entered as a freshman. It was subsequently discovered that the audit sheet which she had been given reflected the 1984 catalog; it was the newer catalog which included the two courses in question for the updated fashion merchandising program of study.

Feeling that the error had been made in the central office when she was given the 1984 audit sheet, A. requested that she be allowed to drop both courses without penalty, even though the last day for drop/add had passed. She

experienced a totally unanticipated reaction to this request, one which began with her being blamed for the mix-up because of the fact that she had changed majors so many times. The advisor she spoke with in the Office of Academic Advising did not appear to A. to want to help her as much as she seemed to want to explain the mix-up.

> The tone of her voice, the way she was making it say, "Well, it's really YOUR fault, A." It just really intimidated me, and I was mad. Maybe I intimidated her with my situation.

It seemed to A. that the issue immediately became not so much that she be allowed to drop the courses, but who was to blame for the error. She was further angered when the advisor expressed the opinion that had A. been doing well in the courses, she wouldn't be sitting in the office at all with her request to drop them. Believing this fact to be irrelevant to her own personal feelings about the courses, A. nonetheless tried to acquiesce by saying that she would wait until after the next exam in both courses before requesting that she be allowed to drop them. The Assistant Dean of Academic Advising, however, gave her 24 hours to make up her mind: either remain in the courses, or initiate an immediate appeal for withdrawal. Feeling pressured to make a decision, and fearful of risking a poor grade, which would lower her already sagging grade point average, A. opted to proceed with the request to drop the courses. However, she again experienced problems. The two people in the Office of Academic

Advising who handled course withdrawals for academic reasons had that very morning been reduced to one. A. found that the remaining advisor who could handle her case would not be in the office that day, and would be there on the following day only during the time when she had a class. The first advisor, who *was* in the office and who was familiar with the withdrawal procedure but who was no longer assigned that responsibility, declined to go against office policy and process the request. Caught in the middle of an office policy change, A. was forced to miss part of a class in order to fit into the limited appointment schedule of the only other advisor available to make a decision about her case. She left the office in tears, feeling discouraged and confused.

> It took me three days to finally get to see somebody. I set up an appointment with [the advisor I was supposed to see and left my class early], and I went over there. And he was not there, and I had to see [the Dean of Academic Advising.] I went in his office and he sat in his chair. He said, "Have a seat," and I sat down. He said, "Now, I've read over your folder, but I want you to tell me in your own words what is going on. And I started telling him, and he said, "You're wrong, A., you've got that wrong. That's the way it works here." And then I never did get to finish telling him what happened. He just interrupted me and went on with what he had to say. And I think it's real sad.

Once again, A. felt that the issue was one of laying the blame, rather than the approval of her request to drop the courses, and she became increasingly angry and upset at being treated as if she were an irresponsible person.

> I don't like to feel like anybody is taking advantage of me. And I don't like to let people

> get away with not caring. I think that if it's their fault, they ought to admit it. It's just like yesterday, my roommate had to babysit, and another girl was going with her. Well, the other girl was late, and [my roommate] kept saying, "This is making ME look irresponsible." And I just think that if it's their fault, they need to do something about it . . . I think they think they need to be right.

A. could never fully understand what she referred to as the "inconsistency" in academic advising; why, after being told repeatedly by advisors to follow the catalog requirements for the year she entered the university, she would be given an audit sheet from a more current catalog by the same advisors, and then be treated as if she were to blame for the error.

A. characterized academic advising at U of C as being fairly consistent with the way she felt she was treated during registration, drop/add, in dealing with cashiers, and when talking with residence hall people. She did not believe the impersonality was as much a factor of the size of the institution as it was the fragmentation of services, combined with the low priority that those groups placed on students.

> I think it's because nobody works together . . . [they] never make any contact with each other. We are what makes the school. Without us, the people have no jobs. [But] I think [we're only] in the back of their minds. I don't think they think about how important we are to them. I think because it's a job . . . they're too busy to be concerned about any of the students. Every school is going to have its faults, but if everybody worked together and tried to set one pattern and one way of doing things, instead of 15 people doing all different things, it'd be a whole lot better.

A.'s experiences have not left her with a love of

education. She admitted that she will to try to enroll in the easiest courses possible from now on, because "I just want to get out of here. That's number one--with the least fuss possible."

A. did not know if another type of academic advising would have made her feel any differently toward formal education or not. She would like to have had the chance to find out, but at this time does not plan to pursue further schooling, and, in fact, may not finish her bachelor's degree.

Interview with "T"

T. was a tall, outspoken, black female student, aged 20, from the southeastern Piedmont section of North Carolina, majoring in communication studies, with a concentration in broadcast/performance. It had been her dream since her early high school days to have a career in radio, and she selected U of C because of its reputation for having an excellent communication studies program, and because of the lower cost of attending a state institution. It wasn't long, however, before she became disenchanted with the program, feeling quite limited as to the number of courses she was allowed to take in her major. She accepted without question the liberal arts courses required by the university to complete a bachelor's degree, but she was never quite sure where she stood in terms of the courses she should take.

> I was confused about the electives part of it. I knew about the college and university requirements, but never added up how many they would be. I only have to have 36 in my major, 122 altogether. Where are these 80-some hours coming from? I don't know how many electives I'm supposed to have. [And] I feel like we don't take enough courses in our major. Sometimes if you'd like to audit a class, communications department already says...they don't want you to audit because they're limited in number . . . They'd like to keep them small because of the equipment and don't like people to audit them. So you can't audit and you can't take [but so many of them] . . . I'd like to take as many courses as I want to take.

The Office of Academic Advising warned T. that for every hour beyond 36 in her major, the maximum allowed in communications, she would be required to take an equivalent number

of hours in liberal arts beyond the required 122 hours for graduation. The restriction discouraged her from pursuing many courses she thought would be interesting, and encouraged what she described as a self-centered attitude with regard to changing the system.

> I feel like it wouldn't affect ME [to try to change things]. I know that's mean, but it wouldn't affect ME, and there are things I could be working on rather than that. I feel like my time is limited. It's not going to help me NOW. They wouldn't put it into practice soon enough for me.

T. characterized the early academic advising that she received at U of C as being nearly ideal. As a freshman, she was accepted into the Residential College, a two-year program in which students live and attend classes in a co-educational dormitory. In addition, students engage in different types of independent study, community service, and workshops, all based on their personal interests. The concern of the faculty members associated with the Residential College was quite apparent to T. from the very beginning, and she was made to feel that she was an important part of the university.

> It was more personal, and people were always helping you in deciding what you wanted to do. I think it was a little different than coming to the school and going running off to see your advisor. The majority of the time, I just came downstairs and asked the people in Residential College. They were very helpful.

T. also worked in the communications department as a work-study student, and received further academic advising and information from the people she saw there every day.

Although she felt that her assigned faculty advisor was good, his time was divided between 108 other advisees, and she was grateful for the extra information she was able to get by chance from the materials she was stapling, copying, and filing at work. She found this to be much more helpful in the long run than any of her advisors had been, and expressed the belief that their concern for her as a person was virtually non-existent.

> It's a large university, and it's like all us human beings walking around are pieces of paper going through files. Everybody is capable of error, and if you don't keep check of what's going on and make sure you've got your stuff right, if you did it wrong, you have to go to summer school . . . You have to keep check of what's going on. All you have is just your say-so, which means nothing. It's not enough to say someone told you something. The university says this, and you're just standing there saying, "But the lady said . . ." You don't know the lady's name, you don't have it in writing. You have to keep check yourself.

As a junior, T. has managed to maintain a 2.4 cumulative grade point average, while taking a full class load of 15 hours and working as a resident assistant in an undergraduate dormitory. Although she did not consider herself to be a brilliant student, she felt that her grade point average was respectable; and for three consecutive semesters during her first two years, she averaged a 3.0 grade point average. She was totally shocked, then, to receive the following letter from the Office of Academic Advising, which included no salutation except her name and home address, and no closing

except for the signature of the Dean of Academic Advising:

January 2, 1985

(Student's name)
(Student's address)

We have received your grades for fall semester and we find that you have failed to pass the minimum number of hours required for continuing in The University. In order to be eligible to continue as a student, you were required to pass a minimum of nine semester hours during the semester just completed. We regret that you failed to meet this minimum requirement, thus becoming academically ineligible to continue your enrollment at U of C.

We will notify the appropriate offices of your ineligibility. If fees have been paid for the spring semester, the Cashier will make the appropriate refund within a short time. If you confirmed your registration for the spring term, this will be cancelled by the Registrar.

For an explanation of academic progress regulations, we refer you to that section in the U of C Student Handbook. If our office may be of further assistance to you in any way possible, please call upon us.

Best wishes for success in your future plans.

[Dean of Academic Advising]

The letter referred to the fact that T. had failed to pass at least three of the six courses for which she was enrolled, even though she had two A's and one B in the courses she passed, and was borderline passing in the courses she had failed. She was angry and upset that neither these facts, nor her previously unblemished academic record, was taken into consideration.

> I felt like, I've never been on academic probation, I've never broken any university policies, so why should they tell me I'm academically ineligible to return? I understand, ok, I didn't pass these 9 hours, but look at my record! Have I done anything [wrong]? Have I broken any rules? Some of my friends the second semester of my freshman year didn't come back. They just got that letter, which says, "You can't come back to school. The End." Which is how my letter read. It was very cold.

According to figures supplied by the Office of Academic Advising, 384 letters like the one T. received had been automatically sent out at the end of the fall 1984 semester to all undergraduates who failed to pass at least one-half of their courses. Of that number, only 98 knew enough to appeal. T. was one who did, feeling that her good academic record and an explanation of the serious personal and financial problems she was experiencing at that time would serve to get her reinstated. She checked the student handbook, and went to the Office of Academic Advising. She was never given the opportunity to plead her case to anyone in person, however. Instead, she was told to write a letter stating her appeal, and that the Office of Academic Advising would "let her know" the Dean's decision later.

> Some lady in the back room said to write a letter and bring it back. I had already written the letter and brought it with me, so I gave it to her. And she said not to come back, to call instead, and they would tell me yes or no, if I was back in the university. If they said "no," I would have taken it a step further. I don't know where, but I would have definitely found out. I had asked to see the Dean, but she said he was in a meeting. I wasn't afraid that I wouldn't get

> back in. Because I was like, hey, what right do these people have? I had too many pluses and only one minus, that's how I thought about it.

T. developed very negative feelings about the Office of Academic Advising from this and other experiences. She found the attitudes there to be incongruent for an agency whose function is supposed to be that of helping students.

> People have to take into consideration, I mean, you know that you have a hard day sometimes, but when you're working with people, you have to put all this aside, even in the manner that you just say, "Hello, may I help you?" Some people aren't very pleasant. And that can be a big turn-off in academic advising. You can come in there scared stiff, and that person snaps, "May I help you?" "She's not in right now." The whole attitude.

Still, T. saw the office to be a necessary part of the university system because of all of the changes that occur from semester to semester in course numbers, requirements, scheduling, program changes, etc. But she wished that the focus would be less negative, and that she could get advice without feeling chastised by the advisors, especially if errors are made on the part of the advisors, themselves.

> [Students] think they're doing everything right, and they get ready to graduate and [advising] says, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no! You didn't do this!" [But] it should be thoroughly checked. If a freshman or a sophomore is told to go and get an audit, they come in and get it, and 10 times out of 10, they just look at it and say, "Oh, I have to take this, this, and this." They don't re-check what is on there. I checked mine carefully and saw that something wasn't right.

T. was referring to an audit sheet she had been given by an academic advisor for a communication studies major with a

broadcast/cinema concentration; because she was working on a broadcast/performance concentration, the required courses were somewhat different. Had she not noticed the difference, she might have been obliged to attend summer school or to delay her graduation another semester in order to make up the additional courses. She revealed that the feelings of distrust she had already developed from being at the university caused her to double check the audit sheet, thereby discovering the error.

> Since I've been at this university, [I've learned] you have to do everything for yourself. People don't give you anything. You don't just sit in your dorm room. You have to get off your butt and go and work for yourself, and that's one thing that I've learned here.

T. received another letter recently from the university, and recalled that she was almost afraid to open it. It read as follows:

> February 26, 1985
>
> MEMORANDUM
>
> To: All Undergraduate Students
>
> From: Coordinator, Student Retention
>
> Re: Faculty Advisor Contact
>
> We hope you are having a successful spring semester at [U of C]!
>
> To emphasize the importance of academic success, we urge you to visit your faculty advisor during the first weeks of any semester. Your advisor is interested in your progress here and is available (during his/her office hours) to assist you. You should contact your advisor con-

> cerning any academic difficulty you experience. If there are questions your advisor cannot answer, please be certain he/she will refer you to the appropriate office.
>
> REMEMBER: [U of C] CARES ABOUT YOU. SEE YOUR FACULTY ADVISOR.

T.'s reaction to the letter was one of irritation and disbelief. In view of the letter she had received only six weeks previously, she found it difficult to treat the second letter as anything but "lip service."

> Everyone in the university got a letter today. It says, "This is the middle of the semester and the university cares about you, see your academic advisor." And I thought, "This is pure bull." It was a waste of paper and labels.

T. summed up her three years of experiences with academic advising in the following way:

> I think what I got, I got from just being in the right place at the right time. In my freshman year, being in the Residential College, and working in the communications department for my first two years. And talking with the professors and instructors there, and seeing other people come in with problems, and seeing their problems corrected or not corrected made me stop and think, "Hey." It gave me some insight on things to do. So I just happened to be in the right place.

T. did not feel that she owed anyone any thanks for her academic advising. She believed that it was through her own efforts that she had gotten as far as she had, and she felt that when she finally graduated, it would be through her own efforts. One lesson that she felt she had learned well from the university was that the only individual she could really trust and rely on was herself.

Interview with "S"

S. was a clean-cut, sensitive, 22-year-old white male student from southwestern Virginia, who lived off campus and worked 10 hours per week. Classified as a senior, he had declared English as his major only the previous year, and maintained close to a B grade point average. Although quiet and soft-spoken, S. related the many times he felt he had to fight to make himself heard at U of C.

S. blamed poor academic advising for his initial difficulties as an incoming freshman student. Because his first assigned faculty advisor was out of the country during registration, and because apparently no one thought about assigning him another, he went to the Office of Academic Advising to talk with someone about classes he might take as an undecided major.

> There was a woman who sat down with me, and we established that I was undecided about my major. And she just said, "Well, this is what freshmen generally take." And so I ended up with a schedule of algebra, western civilization, biology, Spanish, and another class, as well. And for me, being a freshman without really knowing what college was going to be like, it just completely wiped me out after a few weeks. There was no explanation about the way college might be, a way to look at things and to gear them to my own abilities or my own interests, that sort of thing. And I think that it probably was a mistake just to assume that I was going to be like any other freshman and was going to be able to take those courses . . . They're saying you have to take these courses, so they go ahead and throw you in there.

S. forgave the advisor for recommending general freshmen

courses that were too difficult for his abilities, understanding that the university system was based on required coursework, and that most advisors would probably have reacted in the same way. What he could not forgive, however, was being treated almost as a non-person in the process.

> I don't think that they showed much interest in me as an individual at all. It was more like, "You're a freshman, you should take these courses." Bang, bang, bang. And there were no questions, personal questions or interests about anything. It was just, "You're a freshman. Here is what you'll take." I [finally] had to experiment myself and just get a feel for how things worked.

Although he felt that his experimentation was, in many ways, valuable, he admitted that it also cost him a great deal in terms of false starts, dropped courses, extra travel and time, which, with appropriate guidance, may have been better spent. The result was that S. will spend two years at the institution as a senior.

Once he declared a major, S. thought that his advising would improve, but, in fact, his new faculty advisor seemed to want to steer him in a specific direction, based not on S.'s interests, but on the advisor's own area of specialization.

> He seems to have the attitude of, "Well, you're going to major in English," and it's almost as if he wants to gear my curriculum. I have to really stick my neck out and say, "Well, I want to do this." I have to question, because he doesn't really take a real interest in me and my classes. He seems to prefer to say, "Why don't you take this class?" It just seems like we could discuss it more, and I could make my interests known.

Feeling nervous and apprehensive about discussing his own interests with his faculty advisor, S. nevertheless approached the man with a list of the courses he was interested in pursuing. Although he eventually signed up for the classes he had chosen for himself, it was not without feeling that he was asking too much. Besides the feeling that his faculty advisor was "taking the easy route" by selecting his courses for him, S. related that he felt that he was always intruding on the man's time. And even when he did talk with his advisor, he found that usually he would not get all of the information he was seeking.

> My contacts with the advisor are very brief. It always seems to be kind of a rush. You get a kind of a sense of urgency when you sit down to discuss something. Time seems to be a big thing. You get that feeling of being rushed. I don't really get a feeling from talking to other students and from my own experiences that the advisors are completely up on things. I think that they can be helpful, and in general, they can steer you along, but I think it really turns out to be the student's responsibility in the end. It reaches the point where you've got to fight for that, to get out.

S. said that he would not mind taking full responsibility for meeting graduation requirements, if only information were easily and clearly available to students.

> I think that the information is not clear. It seems like if that information was presented, it's not something that would be ignored by students or by advisors. I think maybe it's the whole system. Maybe they have to really set down something solid that is understandable so that the advisors, at least, can understand it, and can, in turn, tell the

> students the fine print of getting out of school. They give you the [student] handbook, and you kind of have to stir through it and figure things out as best you can.

Believing in the importance of asking the right questions at the right time of the right person, S. found that even when he tried to follow this procedure, there were times when he received conflicting information between advisors in the Office of Academic Advising and his faculty advisor. The difficulty for him lay in deciding how much information from each source was actually correct.

> I went to academic advising, and there is a person there who has helped me all along . . . But we did reach one point where there was a little bit of uncertainty about some of the fine print, some little requirement, and so she suggested that I see my advisor about that. And it's kind of [like] trying to find out between the two what the real deal is.

And if he guessed wrong, S. knew that he would be the one who was penalized.

He felt that the university catalog had been little help to him, mainly because of the very general way it was written, and the confusing manner in which information was presented, especially in his major. He believed that relying on the catalog alone was not enough to carry a student through to graduation.

> I know a lot of people who have thought that they were graduating, and have found out that, indeed, they were not, because of some little hidden requirement or something that didn't really present itself. It was overlooked...The advisor should have a firm enough grasp on what the procedure is to be able to catch stuff like that. To be

> able to question you...and say, "Well, look, you have to look out for these things," instead of the student finding out right at the last minute that things are a certain way, and that they have to gear towards that.

A case in point was the 100/300 level requirement. At U of C, a student is required to take at least 36 hours of 300-level courses and no more than 12 hours of 100-level courses during his or her last 60 hours of of classwork. S. said that even though he had read the catalog carefully, he did not remember seeing this requirement mentioned. Instead, he learned about it from a friend, who learned about it when he "got into trouble" just prior to graduation for not having enough 300-level courses. S. was never told why this requirement was important, only that it must be followed in order to avoid an appeals process prior to graduation.

S. characterized his academic advising experiences the same way he characterized his instruction at U of C.: as a rather sterile process without the reciprocal involvement between students, instructors, and the material to be learned.

> You [don't] feel like it's a personal experience. You can lay back and not really be noticed, which is not something I especially try to do. But you kind of get the feeling that it's happening TO you, as much as anything. You can kind of weave your way through, and get a degree without really feeling like you've been in there . . .

S. blamed these feelings partly on the large size of the student body. This was especially apparent to him after he had taken a course at a nearby smaller college, which he

characterized as "friendlier" and "cozier" than U of C. In university classes with several hundred students, S. enjoyed none of the familiarity with other students and instructors that he considered to be an important aspect of a learning environment.

> A lot of the required courses [are] real impersonal, which I guess, since there are so many students and it's a requirement, it happens that way, where you're in a huge crowd of people, and you take notes, and you take the exams, and you get the credit. I tend to spread myself so thin that it's really a matter of making grades than learning anything. You've got these neat classes, and you look at your syllabus, and there are all these neat topics that you'd like to explore and would like to have a firm grasp on, but instead, you've got so many hours [to get in] that you spread yourself to the point of cramming for a test, taking it, and making a grade. And what that really amounts to is simply making grades, and not learning information.

Although he felt badly about the situation, he felt powerless to stop himself from doing what he so strongly disliked; but he also believed that he had to be realistic if he were ever going to meet all of the requirements and graduate.

S. admitted that the size of the institution was not the only reason for his feelings of alienation. Normally a person who got along well with others, he was surprised to find that even reasonable requests for relatively minor deviations from the rules were met with hostility. He related an incident regarding a math class which he had found to be too difficult, and when the instructor suggested that

he enroll, instead, in her lower level course, he willingly agreed. He was told to see the Dean of Academic Advising for approval of the change, and he found the experience to be extremely unpleasant.

> The drop/add period had just ended, so there was the catch. I was wanting to change to take a lower level class a day or two after. And so I got a memo from [the instructor] and approached academic advising with it. And it turned out to be a really big stink over it, because it was [made to seem like] a very, very severe and serious incident, that I was wanting to request this . . .The last line [from the Dean] was, "Well, we're going to have to consider this very closely." And, my God, I'm failing algebra, and my request was to take a class that's going to help me to do well in algebra! But it was not without a lot of discomfort. It really did strike me as unnecessary . . . It's another processing sort of thing. I did feel like I was kind of put on the spot, where I was asking a lot. That's kind of the feeling I eventually came away with.

S. Did not believe that his difficulties were atypical of those of other students enrolled in the university. Recently, while walking through the science building, he encountered a freshman student "with a frantic look about him," waving a piece of paper and looking for just about anyone who would stamp it for him. He felt that he knew exactly what the student was experiencing.

> It was so familiar to me, that I just wanted to shake [him] and say, "This is going to happen for a little while, and you'll [eventually] figure it out." Or try to explain to him the things that I didn't know as a a freshman--that you really have to kind of learn on your own, just trial-and-error. . . That seems to be lacking: explanations for procedures. It seems to be a structured thing. They're going to aim you in a certain direction, and you're going to pretty much

figure things out on your own.

S. indicated that he was no longer surprised by the "fine print" of graduation requirements, and that he fully expected to have to work very hard in order to graduate. The work he referred to, however, was not that of studying to understand the material and to gain knowledge, but rather that of requesting a series of audits, of visiting advisors to double check his deficits, and of asking questions of as many sources as possible, in order to make sure that the system did not swallow him up.

S. summed up his feelings about academic advising and his overall university experiences in the following way:

> I guess there's something that makes it a system of processing people. And I feel like you walk in, and you're not really a person. You're kind of like a ball in a pinball machine, and you kind of have to bounce around and [eventually] get spit out.

Interview with "J"

J., aged 22, was a friendly, conscientious black male student, a junior majoring in communication studies. Although his home was in a nearby city, he lived on campus in order to save travel money and because he was afraid his unreliable car would cause him to miss classes. Dressed in a sleeveless shirt, open to the waist, J. appeared to want to project a very macho image.

As a transfer student from an all-black state institution located in his home town, a school smaller than U of C by about 8,000 students, J. spoke of the advantages of attending the other university and compared his experiences there with those at U of C.

> There was a difference between [my first school] and [U of C]. . . All those students, you can't put but so much time with each student [here]. I understand that. At [my first school], the classes are about half the size. You got more attention. . . . Even the white instructors I've had over there, they were so concerned for the students . . . At [my first school], I was taking math, college algebra I and II, and I made A's. I really enjoyed what I was doing. That's why I wanted to come into math when I got here. But I got here and the classes were the same size, but it was like, "You read the book on your own, and you do this." In other words, we could have came (sic) out better just coming into class the first day and reading this chart up on the board to tell you when the tests are going to be. You leave, don't come back till like four weeks, and just take the test.

Regardless of the lack of attention or concern that J. experienced, it was the better reputation of the larger university that convinced him to make the change. He

believed that he was more likely to be hired for a job with a degree from U of C. The more time he has spent at the larger university, however, the more apparent the differences have become.

J. related how very surprised he was, upon first enrolling at U of C, to feel that he was very much alone, even with so many people around. Believing that either no one cared what happened to him or that everyone assumed that he knew what to do, he recalled his feelings of alienation during his first semester.

> I got the impression that people would show a lot more concern about things you should take and things you should not take. And I was very surprised [when I got here]. I was shocked. I didn't know how to pay for books. I didn't know I had to wait in long, horrible lines to do everything. This school has taught me more patience than anything else. And more frustration.

Because of a lack of guidance during his two years at U of C, J. has changed majors five times. Although eager to learn and willing to do extra work in order to keep up with his classes, he has found the coursework to be very difficult, and the instructors and faculty advisors to be unconcerned with his academic progress. He spoke very passionately of wanting to "fit in," and he believed that by declaring a major, he would become a part of a group. Nothing seemed to work out for him, however, and his grades remained below a 2.0 average. None of his advisors appeared to notice that he was floundering.

> When I got to this university, I didn't rightly

> know exactly what I wanted to major in. I think that's the average college student's problem, because there are so many alternatives to take, that you can just be thrown off, if you go around experimenting, which is exactly what happened to me. I experimented too much. I was first an art major. Then I switched to math. To my surprise, it was a lot harder over here than what I thought it was. Ok, then I switched my major to data processing. And then it got more difficult, certain concepts that I could grasp, but it didn't trigger my emotions and my mental aspects. It wasn't grabbing me like I wanted it to. So I decided to change back to art, then I changed from art to communications. So here I am.

J. believed that his interests all along were in the field of communications. He related how much pleasure he got from public speaking and from acting in plays, but he observed that no one ever took the time to talk with him about his interests or to guide him in the right direction. As a result, J. currently has 30 credit hours of free electives, and it will take him an extra year to graduate. Since he must work to finance his education, the extra time he must spend will most definitely be a hardship for him.

> [Had I had better advising], I think maybe I wouldn't have experimented so much. Nobody really showed any concern. I guess they assumed that I just knew what I was doing. They assume that, "Oh, he knows what he's doing." And then sometimes, I guess they know you _don't_ know what you're doing, [but] they're going to let you go on anyway, put more money into this university, more time into this university, so they can get more out of their paycheck, or whatever, or more to the school.

Not knowing what direction to take, and enrolling in classes that were too advanced for his abilities, J. has often found himself in academic difficulties. For example,

although he had failed beginning Economics 201 his first semester at U of C, his advisor approved his second semester schedule, which included not only the same beginning Economics course he had previously failed, but also intermediate Economics 202. And despite the fact that his overall grade point average was less than a 2.0, he had no trouble obtaining permission to enroll in 18 hours of coursework, an overload for any student. The result was that he failed to pass at least one-half of his courses, and he received a letter from the Dean of Academic Advising that he was no longer eligible to attend the institution. He was extremely upset, and in order to appeal the decision, he wrote an emotional four-page letter to the Dean pleading his case as elaborately and as sincerely as he knew how.

> Mr. [Dean's name], please sir, consider me to be able to come back in the fall. I am a very ambitious and hardworking young man who has a desire to graduate from [U of C]. Sometimes I try to do more than I can handle, but I feel as though I've learned my lesson. . .

In the Office of Academic Advising, the letter was marked for spelling errors, placed in his file, and his appeal was granted.

Except for relating the basic lack of academic advising and concern on the part of his instructors and advisors, J. was reluctant to make statements that would make it appear as if he were expecting too much from the university. He seemed to believe that if a person were accepted as a student in a large institution, then that person must necessarily be

prepared to deal with impersonal attitudes and must assume that certain things would happen. To him, being an adult meant struggling on his own, if necessary, and since it seemed to be non-adultlike to him to admit that he did not know certain facts about things like course scheduling and requirements, he preferred to rely on hearsay from other students, rather than risk losing the respect of his faculty advisors and professors. The excuse he made for the situation was his infringement on the advisor's valuable time.

> Some of the advisors will tell you, "Get it on your own, Buddy." They won't tell you that, but you can get that [feeling] sometimes. But I can understand their viewpoint, too. They have so many things to do. I don't even go to my advisor, if I can help it. That's just how independent I've become. It's to the place where I can go and get my audit sheet and figure out my schedule. And once I get that figured out, I will go to my advisor and tell him, "This is what I have down. What do you think about it?" Right quick, he'll look at it. "Ok, this looks good, that looks good, ok." That's it. . .I don't take their time, because I understand they're busy, and I'm an adult, and I have common sense enough to see what's going on this audit sheet, to see what my requirements are.

Even though J. worked very hard at being independent, he was also very anxious to be liked and accepted, and he tried to gain approval and respect by doing what he thought was expected of him and by working hard. When, after trying so hard, the approval was not forthcoming, J. blamed his failure on the racial attitudes of his advisors, his instructors, and his peers. He related several incidents, one which involved

an instructor who was also his academic advisor.

> I was in this Economics class, but I always felt whenever I went to [the] class that I was being [put down] in some way or another. And I would pay attention, sit in the front row of the class, I'd take good notes, and I would read, and I would really put forth the effort. I would talk to [the instructor] about it, and I would go to his office, and he would show me how to do the problem, and for some reason, I still felt like, you know, I was helping myself, too, but there was always this thing that he wasn't but so much concerned for me. There's some times an instructor may not even mean anything by what he do, (sic) but I may take it as a racial point. You don't want to fool yourself, but then, again, you don't want to by-pass the problem, either. Whenever I would talk to him, I felt like, "Gosh, is he trying to make me feel like I'm dumb? I'm not dumb. Don't tell me I'm stupid. I'm not." And the white kids I know, they were no smarter than I was. Lord knows, I tried. Maybe that major was not for me.

Although he admitted that the racial prejudice of the instructor/advisor was not blatant, J. could not explain the man's lack of respect or concern for him in any other way. He found a similar situation with the instructor of a one credit hour voice class he had enrolled in "for fun."

> I tried everything I could do to get on her good side, to show interest, and I made a B on the only test she gave. I did everything I was supposed to do. I even went to seek additional help to sing the proper pitches and listened to records to get certain tunes. Came midterm, she gave me a C-. I said, "What do I have to do to pull my grade up?" She said, "More class participation." So I did. She would show me approval, that she's trying to work with me, but in spite of that, I got a C in her class. In the back of my mind, I never could erase the rejection. . . From that point on, there was nothing she could do to change the way I was thinking of her. She even told me, "I don't know what it is, J., I did all I could to

> get through to you." She even said in class one day that she had never met a black person who couldn't sing. That's stereotypical thinking right there.

J. was particularly hurt to receive a C, because for the first time since his enrollment in the university, he was making good grades. Had the instructor given him the higher grade he felt he had worked hard for, he would, for the first time in his academic life, have made the Dean's list. It meant quite a lot to him, and he felt that it might have made up for the lack of encouragement and damage to his self-confidence. But the instructor refused to consider a better grade, even though he talked with her about it. He did not pursue it with the head of the department, however, feeling that it would be "a waste of my time."

J.'s hurt was very evident, and he emphasized the fact that he was willing to do nearly anything to gain acceptance and to succeed at the university, if only someone would notice his potential and give him a little encouragement.

> I can do anything that I put my mind to do. Anything. It can be accounting, anything. If you work with me, I'll be one of the best of anything. Just a little work with me. No one here was able to do that. Oh, they would show a degree of concern. They would socialize with you outside of the class. And they would smile and joke and be themselves, but when it comes down to your subject work, no [concern] was really given.

J. was not asking for any kind of special help, just because he was a minority student. He did not feel, for instance, that special academic advising for minorities was an answer to the problems he was facing. Because he was so

anxious to be accepted as a person, he felt that a separate agency would only contribute to the alienation he already felt as a minority student. He indicated that he would rather experience the "hard knocks" from poor advising, than be singled out as needing special help, which many people would automatically assume was remedial in nature.

> They shouldn't have a special anything around here [for blacks]. If you can't do the work, then you're in the wrong field, you're in the wrong major, or you're doing something wrong you shouldn't be doing. You should go out and seek help. It's just that simple. Don't put people apart in a certain category. Put us all together. Just let us go out there and discover for ourselves. Let us make our own mistakes and just learn from it. . . I mean, people are people.

Despite the racial prejudice that J. perceived on the campus, despite the uncaring attitudes of advisors and instructors, and despite his reluctance to ask timely and important questions for fear of appearing ignorant, J. still believed that as long as he continued to "play the game," he would eventually graduate from the university.

> Life is a game, by itself. You have to play the game in order to get certain things you want out of life. . . We all play the game [here]--by *their* rules.

Interview with "V"

At age 35, V., a vivacious black woman, was the oldest student in the study. She had been married for thirteen years, was the mother of four school-age children, and also worked full time as a secretary in one of the departments on campus. She had just recently decided to go back to school as a business information systems major, and was taking two classes per week toward her degree. She stated that her academic advising difficulties began with the admissions process.

> I called over here and I was switched from one department to another, and finally I got to adult students [office]. I got a runaround, [and] what really made me mad is that when I applied, I didn't have any guidance. I called over to adult students [and] I said, "I want to go in as an adult student." I said, "What do I need to do?" So they said for you to get your transcript, and all this information, and have it sent in to admissions. I sent everything to admissions, and before I realized it, I was accepted into the university, not as an adult student, but as a regular student. I didn't want that.

It had been V.'s understanding that adult students, by virtue of the time lapse between high school graduation and college admission, were allowed more flexibility in course requirements. But V. was told by the Admissions Office that before she could be considered for acceptance as a student in the university, she would be required to remove one foreign language and one math deficiency. She was very upset to learn that after so many years, she was being forced to go

back and take a beginning foreign language, a subject she had always disliked intensely. She became even angrier about the situation after discovering that she had been accepted into the university, after all, as a regular student rather than as an adult student. She had been told by someone that as an adult student, she would not have been required to take a foreign language at all.

> So then I get really upset. "This university is giving me the runaround," I thought. So I come back to the office [where I work]. Luckily, we have graduates in this office, people who have graduated from this school. And someone knows to tell you [what] you should [do].

She was surprised to learn later, quite by accident, that all students, regardless of their standing, were expected to remove any deficiencies, and that the only difference between being classified as an adult student and a regular student was the fact that adult students were not required to submit SAT scores for admission. No one in the Admissions Office, the Adult Student Office, or the Office for Academic Advising had ever explained the distinction to her.

Although she wanted to take some computer science courses, just to see if it was really an area she wanted to pursue, she was told again that she would not be allowed to enroll in any classes until she removed her deficiencies, if she were seeking a degree program. Even though she was not sure at that time whether she wanted a degree or if she would like to enroll in various selected classes, she felt compelled to remove her deficiencies before she did anything

else. Once that was taken care of, and she was accepted as a regular student, she thought that her changed status would result in better academic advising. She found, however, that nothing was different.

> I had to rid myself of my deficiencies, so those were the first courses I took. But now my deficiencies have been removed, so now I'm taking regular courses. So I said, "Well, I should take an English course, and maybe I should take a computer course." So I called my advisor and they told me he no longer works for the university. Ok. I said, "Ok. What am I supposed to do next?"

Apparently no one had thought to alert her to the fact that she needed to be assigned a new advisor, nor explained to her the procedure for doing so, and she found herself making a number of telephone calls and spending a great deal of time trying to find another advisor. V. described herself as a serious student with limited time, and because she worked full time and had family responsibilities as well, she felt that her time was too valuable to be spent trying to find advisors who would be able to give her the time and the information she needed. Nor did she have the time to experiment with a variety of courses, as she felt many traditionally aged freshmen generally did. She was disappointed that advising at U of C was nothing like she had expected it would be.

> I thought they would sit down and they would say, "Ok, this for the first year. You might consider taking these courses, because they would help you in this and this and that." Guidance. I don't even know what to take next semester. I've been

> thinking about it, because I don't always want to take required courses. I'd like to take a required course plus a course towards my major, and frankly, I'm afraid to even look into the Business Information Systems or the Business courses, for fear of not taking the right one.

V. felt very discouraged at the lack of general academic advising available, and she considered it to be particularly important to her as a beginning freshman student to "get off on the right foot." Because her first assigned faculty advisor had left the university, she was assigned a second faculty advisor, whom she felt was very difficult to talk with and who ended up giving her erroneous information, besides.

> You can tell by a person's voice whether they really want to help you or not, or if you're bothering them. And when I was talking to [my advisor], to me, she was saying, "You're bothering me." I remember I was upset because I didn't want to take another year of Spanish, and my advisor told me that I would have to take another year of Spanish, and I said, "That's impossible!" So I was going to sign up for Spanish again, when I did not need to.

Upset at the conflicting information, and not knowing where to turn, V. contacted the Office of Academic Advising, hoping that they would fill in the gaps left by her faculty advisor. She found, to her dismay, that the attitudes of some of the advisors in the advising office were as impersonal as she had found her faculty advisor to be.

> I've noticed how some of them treat students, and I wouldn't treat anyone like that. Sometimes the students bring it on themselves. If the student is frustrated and doesn't know where to go or what to do, they treat them as though, "You idiot. You should know what's going on." I'm not saying all of them are like that, but I'm saying some of them I've seen [are]. I've

> talked to others on the phone, and it's like I'm intruding on their privacy, so therefore, I leave them alone.

Given the lack of information available to students, V. found it difficult to accept the statement in the university catalog that the responsibility for meeting requirements for graduation lies with the student. She felt the expectation that students accept full responsibility was fair only when information were shared with them 100 per cent, and she did not believe that that was the case at U of C.

> I don't think they let students know a lot of things on campus. That's Academic Advising's responsibility to keep you up to date, at least to let you know where you're at. It's a two-way street here. Why do we have Academic Advising if they're not there to advise us? Isn't it Academic Advising's responsibility to keep up with what we're supposed to be taking? If not, what are they over there for? Whenever anything happens, it's the student's fault. How would we know if we're being misadvised? If it wasn't for the fact that I work here and can talk to several different people and get what's going on on campus, I would be upset [all the time].

V. felt that the lack of communication between faculty members, administrators, and university staff, and the impersonal attitudes toward students were more responsible for the problems she had experienced than was the size of the institution. She believed that faculty members and administrators were so involved in their particular specialties, that they often forgot that the purpose of the institution was to offer the type of academic atmosphere necessary for students to prepare themselves for post-university life. She did not

think that most advisors were even aware of the long-lasting effects their guidance--or lack of guidance--can have on students.

> I think they need to start going for the students. They'd better start thinking [that] if it wasn't for the students, they wouldn't have a job. I guess the [faculty advisors] probably think, "Well, what little bit of money I do make, why should I make all this big effort?" But they mess with people's lives . . . And I think a lot of them forget that these are human beings that they have to deal with.

V. expressed doubts that black students, in particular, were totally welcome at the university, and stressed the belief that if blacks were truly a part of the system, there would be no need for a special black history month, or, for that matter, any programs solely for black students. The message, to V., was not that black students would find that these programs made them feel more "at home" in the university, but that black students were set apart as being different. Other perceptions added to this feeling of racial alienation.

> Maybe it's because I'm black, but I think a lot of people think that black students shouldn't be here. I honestly feel that way because of certain things that are said in class. Attitudes. This professor was [intimating] that blacks are ignorant and can't learn. In class he's saying this. This is ridiculous. I think some of the professors are so smart, they don't realize they're stupid in personality. They [may be] smart, but they are just not people-oriented. That's not going to do the students any good.

Like J., V. sometimes believed that there was no other way to explain certain attitudes by university faculty and

staff except by suspecting racial prejudice, and many of her black friends seemed to share this belief. V. felt that her responsibilities in meeting course requirements and learning the subject matter were enough to deal with without having to worry about possible negative racial attitudes among her instructors and advisors, as well.

As an adult student with family and work responsibilities, V. expressed more concern about time than did the younger students in the study who lived on campus. The long lines for registration and payment of tuition, while not a pleasant experience for anyone, have been especially difficult for her, since she must necessarily take off time from her job, which must be made up at a later time. She mentioned the hardships caused by her having to take even two courses per semester--twice a week she gave up her lunch hour, and twice a week she had to make special arrangements for her family, because she arrived home late. She expressed the wish that she could take a course once a week during the evening for three hours, such as the arrangement available for graduate students. She found that most undergraduate courses are not set up on that basis. When she needed to see an advisor, she was obliged to make special arrangements to leave her job, because most advisors are unavailable after 5:00. It appeared to V. that the university was really set up for younger students without full-time jobs and families to support.

V. has been discouraged many times, but has continued to believe in the importance of getting her degree. Her goal, she said, was to graduate and to work at free lance jobs in different business information systems, which would leave her with more time to spend with her family, and particularly with her handicapped daughter who attends a special school. She has had to become savvy to the ways of the university almost exclusively through trial and error, and she stressed the fact that she always consults several sources whenever she seeks academic advising. She believed that that was the only way to "beat the odds" that seemed stacked against her from the very beginning of her university experience.

V. summed up her feelings about the university in the following way:

> I read the [letter] that said, "Get in touch with your academic advisor," and all this. At the end, it said, "We care about you." Care?! Are you joking?! I laughed.

Interview with "C"

Classified as a senior international student, C. spoke English perfectly, with only a slight trace of an accent. A South American by birth, she had also lived in Scandinavia as a foreign exchange student, and could speak five languages fluently. She had studied ballet since the age of seven, and came to the university hoping to pursue dance education; however, in her sophomore year, some physical problems with her knees forced her to give up dancing and consider another major. She said that she had originally intended to submit a Plan II option (where students attempt to select their own individualized programs of study), combining her interests and abilities in foreign languages with dance and international broadcasting. She enlisted the help of a faculty member, but was discouraged from following through with her ideas by that advisor, who had seen more than one Plan II option turned down in committee.

> Too much trouble. Too much trouble. I didn't pursue it [because] I knew that it was going to be a lot of trouble, and I was told that I was going to come up against a lot of hassle in order to get it accepted. This faculty member told me that it would take a _lot_ of effort, going through a lot of barriers in order to achieve the goal.

Because of her interest in people, in travel, and in languages, and after talking with friends, she decided to change her major to speech communication. She related that she was satisfied with the program of study she was given to follow, and that she had no difficulty in accepting the major

course requirements selected by the department. Instead of complaining, as she felt many American students do, about certain required courses and too few electives, C. stated that having the autonomy to select any electives at all was quite a bonus to her.

> In [my country] when you go to college there, you declare your major, and that's it. They tell you the courses you're going to take. You follow this certain program from the very first day of classes till the end. There are no electives. There's no such thing. They don't even know it exists until they come here or hear about the American programs. Knowing that I had electives here was already an advancement.

Although as a senior, she could now appreciate the choices she has had in selecting some of her courses, it was a very different situation when she first arrived in a strange country and in a large university setting. If American students are overwhelmed by the size and complexities of attending a school with an enrollment of 10,000 students, a foreign student, with language and cultural differences, will find it even more bewildering.

> There are three or four days for orientation. So I got here on the first day the dorms opened so I could go to whatever. I did not get a schedule of the events. I heard somebody say, "There's a convocation in [the auditorium] tonight." I said, "Oh, I didn't know that." And I found that out half an hour before. The next day, I had to go different places, and I was extremely confused. I had just arrived in this country, and I had no idea what was going on. I did not know that I was going to have to go through registration. I did not know anything. I thought, "Well, you're accepted, you say which major you want to go in, all you have to do is go to classes. They'll tell you what to do."

C. recalled that no one from the university had taken the time to explain to her what the procedures were for registration, how to go about selecting her courses, or what to expect, in general, as a student. She said that she learned everything the hard way, and that without the help of other students, she did not know how she would have gotten through the process.

> At 9:00 at night, the day before we were supposed to stand in line at [the gym], I see all these people walking around with newspapers in their hands, these little courses, and I'm going, "Why on earth, what is this?" And they said, "Don't you have your schedule?" [I said], "What schedule? I'm such-and-such a major, am I not just supposed to go to class?" [They said], "What classes? You have to sign up for your classes." [I said], "Sign up? How?" They told me, "You have to decide what classes you're going to take." [I said], "_I_ have to decide? _I_ have to pick out [my classes]?" So that first night, it was a nightmare trying to figure out my schedule, because you know dance courses are all one credit, but you have to be in class three hours a week. So if you look on my transcript, I took eight courses that first semester. I didn't know any better. Whoever was in the dorm who was also a freshman, we just helped each other.

C. believed that the size of the student body was really not the major problem in the university. Instead, she felt that faculty and staff simply take it for granted that students--even incoming freshmen and foreign students--somehow come in knowing what they're supposed to do.

> They really assume you know what the system is like, what you really need to do . . . When I came, it was assumed that I knew that I had to make my schedule, that I knew I had to go to registration. I didn't even know how to preregister. At least foreign students should

> be told something. Not only you don't know the language very well, but you're confronted with a whole new system that you're not familiar with and have to go through. I got up at 7:00 in the morning, got in line to register. It was a mile long. I stood in line for six hours, and then I stood in the math line for two more hours. And when I was the third person away to get the courses, the only section I could get was closed out . . . I didn't want to come here in the first place.

Although a lack of basic guidance in course selection and scheduling caused her to end up with several unnecessarily difficult semesters, C. has managed to maintain a 3.95 grade point average, and has made the Dean's List every semester. In addition, she is an active member of several campus organizations, the president of two, and teaches courses in foreign language for undergraduates. Despite her excellent academic record, however, she missed a "personal touch" at the university.

> I know that I have mostly designed my curriculum myself. What I would do was just come in with my courses set up, and [my advisor] would just sign my cards. She's a very busy person . . . She gave me a sheet that described what the requirements were to fulfill the major.

Even with the limited time spent with her faculty advisor, C. felt that she had been helpful, at least until a problem arose with the advisor's advisee load. Feeling that she was being assigned more new students to advise than she could handle, the faculty advisor asked the Office of Academic Advising not to assign her any more new students. A misunderstanding in the office, however, resulted in her name

being totally removed from the list of advisors, and all of her current advisees were reassigned. C. was reassigned to a new advisor who, although in the speech communication department, was unfamiliar with her particular concentration. It left C. feeling that she was more on her own than ever. She tried to rely all the more heavily on the university catalog, which she believed does not give students enough information, and on the Student Handbook, which she found even less helpful.

> Nobody reads [the Student Handbook]. It's not updated. They printed the one this year with information from last year . . . And it doesn't tell you enough anyway. I've read it. There's a little paragraph on academic advising that says it takes care of your student records. If you have any questions, go over there. But if you don't know what questions to ask, how can you go?

A case in point was the 100/300 level requirement for graduation, which, although mentioned in the university bulletin, takes up only two sentences. She felt that it was not stressed as being as important as the Office of Academic Advising makes it out to be. Although she was short six hours out of the 36 required 300-level courses, she believed that several facts needed to be considered in her case. First, two courses that she had taken as 300-level courses had recently been changed to 200-level, and she believed that Academic Advising should count them as the 300-level courses they were when she enrolled in them. Secondly, because she had been forced by physical problems to change majors during the second semester of her sophomore year, she was obliged to take more of the required 100 and 200 level courses much

later than students who declared the major as freshmen. She also felt that the fact that she was currently enrolled in five 500-level courses should be considered in the final decision. She went to Academic Advising to straighten out the problem. They took into consideration all of her arguments, but failed to make any final decision on her status.

> They said, "Well, we'll see." So I still don't know. All I've been told was "Don't worry. It shouldn't be a problem." But I was not told, "Yes, you are graduating." I'll have 30 hours at the 300 level or above. I'm assuming they're going to count it. I didn't have anything in writing, and I was told [by friends] that that's what I should make sure that I get. But both times I went in about that, I was told not to worry about it. I didn't go back and ask for anything in writing, [because] they gave me the impression they were really busy. That they had a lot to do. I hate to bother people. If I have to go back for a third time for the same reason, I will not go back.

C. couldn't help but worry a little, regardless of what she considered to be a rather off-handed attitude in the Office of Academic Advising. She felt she had worked too hard and had accomplished too much only to discover at the last moment that she could not graduate or would not have an accurate transcript because of some small infraction--an infraction that she might not even know about until it was too late to correct without penalty. She felt that part of the problem in the Office of Academic Advising was that it was just "too professional" for an office whose primary function was to assist students.

In Academic Advising, they were very profes-

> sional in dealing with me. Professional. What I mean by that is being kind of distant, but trying to do their job well. When somebody gives you professional treatment, I perceive it as being they're doing their job and trying to do it well, but they won't ask you any personal questions or about your interests or whatever. Just go straight to the matter and try to resolve it as soon as possible.

Because of her aversion to being made to feel as if she were "bothering people," and the uncomfortable feeling she said she gets from the Administration Building itself, she indicated that she would just wait and see if any problems developed when she was ready to graduate in May and deal with them at that time.

C. characterized her experiences at the university as being similar to her feelings about the Administration Building.

> It really surprised me when I saw that they decided to build [the Administration Building] and waste as much space as they have. I do think that you lose the closeness. I think they had in mind the connectedness of the place. You really seem to think, yeah, all these offices are strung on a string like beads, and so they're all interrelated, but still, when you stand in the middle, _you're_ not part of them at all. You're not part of that chain of beads. It gives you a feeling of helplessness. Where do I go from here? Which office should I go into? And where should I start? It almost seems like you're intruding [into someone's] space . . . I think it has to do, too, with the floor. The floor is bare in the middle, and each office starts out with a carpet. It seems like you're going from a lowly earth-covered floor to this kingly room where the offices are, and you really need a lot of awe and respect, and you feel intimidated to walk in, in the first place.

C. felt that it was unfair for the university to expect students to accept the full responsibility for meeting their

graduation requirements when they were afraid to ask questions or did not know what questions to ask. She saw, instead, the responsibility as being shared between the university and the students.

> What I would suggest for Academic Advising is to make up a little booklet, and specify all the rules and policies and whatever. The students can come and question those if they want to, because you can always read several interpretations into [the catalog] . . . I think they're afraid of putting it in there, and then everybody will come in with certificates and [waivers] or whatever, and try to make it a big deal . . . What I'm saying is they should allow for leeway. They should be more flexible as far as, say, something like saying the students are responsible for meeting their requirements or passing the required courses in their major, or fulfilling the requirements in their field that they've agreed to pursue. And the university will see that all the bureaucracy will be taken care of. That's a reason lots of people don't graduate or don't appeal for waivers, because they don't know. So I think if they're going to put the responsibility on the student, they should inform the student about our choices and our possibilities.

In a way, C. felt penalized by the American philosophy of education that says that everyone should have the opportunity to go to college. She believed that the system encouraged young people to go to school, regardless of their goals or interests, just to get a degree, and that students who do not want to be in the university or who are not academically prepared to be in the university create problems that make certain rules and regulations a necessity.

> I personally believe that not everybody should go to college. There are lots of jobs that are technical or specific that don't

> need four-year training, and if you do inculcate the American mentality [with the idea that] everybody should go to college, you'll end up with a whole bunch of people in college who shouldn't be there to begin with. Then you're going to have to adapt your standards and rules to them, and the people who should be there are going to be hurt in some way or another. And I think that's a lot of what's happening here.

As a foreign student, C.'s perspectives about American universities centered around what she believed to be the meritocratic American value system. She felt that those groups without power or status, as students find themselves to be in, are treated accordingly.

> I think students are looked down upon just because they don't have the titles these people on top have. And I think that says a lot, too, not about the people on top, but about the American value system, in general. If you don't have a certain title, if you haven't earned this or that or the other, you're no one . . . Everything [is] based on your grades, on your honors, and what kinds of things are bestowed on you . . . I said, "Ok, well, if that's what it's going to take." I just don't think that people should be measured by titles, but by who they are and how they can do what they claim to be able to do.

C. has the grades, the honors, and the awards, but when she finds herself worrying about trivial requirements and out-dated regulations, she knows that, as a student, she still does not have respect.

> Many of these rules were set a long time ago for a different group of people, and nobody's bothered to go back and change them. I think basically it's apathy, not the size of the university. Or lack of interest in the direct affects of those rules on people . . . I think people look at [their work here] as an 8 to 5 job, and go home, and don't really think about anything else other than the paperwork they need

to do. But at the university, I think the ultimate end is the student and his or her education. I think the underlying principle in all this is people's attitudes. And how they should be changed.

Interview with "P"

P., a diminutive, perky, blue-eyed blond, aged 19, was the youngest student in the sample. Her home was in a small town in southwestern Virginia, and she was just completing the second semester of her freshman year with a 3.8 grade point average. Even though she had attended a large high school, she was not at all prepared for what she found when she first came to the university, especially after getting a different perception of the place from a recruiter in the Admissions Office.

> The reason I applied at [U of C] was they have College Days, and the lady who was here from [the university] was great at her job. And she gave me a lot of information, and I got an application from that. It was a lot different [than I expected]. For example, [my dorm] was built in 1904. It was supposed to be renovated after Christmas. They sent us a letter this summer saying, "You'll be moving after Christmas." And the architects got into some disagreement with the people here . . . so we stayed here a whole year. The place is just horrible. The plaster is just peeling off the ceiling. Oh, it's just dismal.

Although the sheer numbers of students made her feel very insignificant, P. found the attitudes of faculty, advisors, and staff to be the most difficult part of university life, even from her first days on campus.

> I pretty much felt lost in the swim, this tiny fish in this big ocean . . . I came in June of last year to preregister for my classes. I went through orientation. It wasn't very helpful. I had a math teacher as a temporary advisor, and I was asking her all these questions about possible majors. Here's this little kid, who doesn't know anything. They slam this newspaper

> down, the schedule of classes. They slam it down and say, "Pick your classes." And this little kid is just overwhelmed. And I was asking her these questions, and she said, "I have no idea. I'm a math professor. I don't know about any other majors." I could have probably done just as well on my own.

Disappointed at the outset with the lack of adequate advising she received at orientation, P. said that she and her mother and father, who were there to share the excitement of her first college experience, were even more put off by the prepared program that was presented to new students and their parents.

> My parents were really offended over a lot of things. They brought in these psychologists talking about the new sexual freedom that your children will have. Dad said they just dwelled upon it. And he said, "I didn't feel like listening to two psychologists tell me about my daughter and her sexual freedom, and how she's going to come to college and become loose." They just said when you come to college, it would be like that. There are going to be adjustments, but that seemed to be the main emphasis . . . They did discuss other things, but [mom and dad] were just taken aback by that. As far as preparing me for what was going to happen, it didn't really. But if I had had to come to registration lines in the fall, I think I'd have gotten in the car and gone home.

P. felt that even though the courses that were recommended to her by her orientation advisor did not quite fit her abilities, she felt satisfied with her schedule, until she went home and talked with her high school Spanish teacher. Because she had had four years of Spanish, her orientation advisor suggested she take Spanish 205, a Spanish literature class; her high school teacher suggested she take

204, intermediate Spanish II, instead. When she came back to school to begin classes, she went to the Office of Academic Advising to get their recommendation and was told that with her background, 204 was "fine." But when she dropped in to introduce herself to her newly assigned faculty advisor, the woman looked at her schedule and told her something altogether different.

> She said, "How in the world are you in Spanish 204?!" I said, "I just signed up for it." And she said, "Well, how much Spanish have you had?" And I said, "Four years." So she goes, "There's absolutely no way you should be in there." She said, "You should be in 203, intermediate grammar." So Ok, so I went back, and I talked to this girl that is a Spanish minor, and she said, "Don't worry about it." She said I could handle it. Most of my advising comes from students, anyway. And so I went to 204, and got an A. But then my [faculty] advisor told me that I have to have two intermediate levels of foreign language. So now I'm in 203. I had to drop back a year.

Her faculty advisor was unaware of the fact that although students are required to be proficient through the intermediate level of a foreign language, (204), as long as a student could successfully demonstrate his or her proficiency through that level, the requirement was satisfied. There had been no need for her to backtrack and take the 203 level course.

P. felt that her faculty advisor was not really interested in helping her; she got the distinct impression that the woman was advising only because it was a duty she had been assigned to do.

> My [faculty] advisor was not very good . . .

> I could never find [her]. She's never available. She always puts me off. It's like, "Well, you're only a freshman, and you have three more years, so don't worry about it. You'll get it later." That kind of attitude. And I thought, "I'm an important person. I may be just starting out, but the things I do right now I consider to be very important." And I consider my time just as important as [she] considers hers, and I wish that she would sit down with me and help me use it valuably.

Feeling that she was bothering her faculty advisor, P. tried to put together a schedule of classes on her own. Even with help from her friends, however, she found that she had too many questions and not enough information to complete her course outline.

> I finally went to my advisor and said, "I don't know what classes to take or what's going on. I'm confused. There are 30 classes I can take. What do I take?" So she handed me a sheet that had my requirements on it, the recommended classes. She said, "Here, just go by this . . . So I went [back] the next day and said, "How are these classes?" And she said, "Well, they're Ok, I guess. I have a meeting." And she just went out.

Besides other students, P. believed that the most help she received in two semesters was from one of her instructors, who seemed as dismayed by the university system as the students were.

> He sat down just before registration, and I've learned most of the things I've learned about getting around here [from him]. He said, "There's a bunch of bull crap around here, and you've got to learn to get around it." He said that to his class. "And today, I think it's valuable to spend class time, so I'm going to tell you some things to do." And he did. It was really helpful. He said have some audits. He said if you're not particularly good, like in math, don't waste your time with it, if it's not your major. Just take

> the easier courses to get them out of the way. Don't bust your tail. And you have to make them think that you're more important here than you actually are, so that they'll help you.

P. said that she found it very difficult to make most staff members at the university believe she was important at all. She related an incident in the Registrar's Office that particularly offended her sense of values.

> I wasn't used to everybody being so rude. I think that was the worst thing. I found that just in order to get anything done, you have to be rude back to them. That's a shame, because I've always been raised to be polite. Like when I went into the Registrar's Office. I went in there one day, and this poor lady was just working her tail off. There were five people who needed things done, and this [other] lady was just sitting there, smoking a cigarette. She was just watching the other lady do the work. And I said, "Could you help me please?" And she goes, "She'll get you later, honey, don't worry about it." And she continued sitting there, while the four of us waited. And she just sat there . . . [Her] cigarette was more important to her than a student.

P. was quick to admit that she found the quality of academics at the university to be quite good, even if the large classes put her off at first. Although she missed the individual attention she had received at her high school, she understood that a personal touch was difficult in a class with 200-plus students. She also found it difficult to deal with the fact that after working so hard in high school, she felt that coming to the university "wiped the slate clean," and that she was being forced to reestablish her credibility as a good student all over again.

P. said that after nearly two semesters, she was getting

acclimated to the three R's of the university--rules, regulations, and requirements--but she felt that she could never get used to the uncaring attitudes, regardless of how long she might stay. She said that she only has to walk into the Administration Building, and she feels very negative vibrations. She related that every time she went to the building to get an answer to a question, she was sent to a minimum of three other places to find the answer.

> An example is that I made the Dean's List. They say they'll send [the information] to your hometown newspaper. Well, February went by, and it was March, and mom said, "Please go check. I'm proud of you and I want it to be there." So first I went to Academic Advising. Academic Advising sent me to the Registrar. And then three different ladies in the Registrar's office didn't know, and finally, one lady figured out that you have to go to the basement of the Alumni House to the publications department. I was so discombobulated by then, that I just went back to the dorm and said, "Forget about it." So then I finally got my courage up and decided I was going to get it all straightened out. So I finally found the publications department. And she said, "Well, the lady who handles that is not here, so come back later." So I went back again, and the lady said, "Well, are you out-of-state? Well, to tell you the truth, we got in-state students out to all the newspapers, but work piled up, and we didn't get out-of-state students done. We put that on the back burner for a while till we got caught up." I'm paying double what [in-state] people pay to come to this university. Should I get pushed to the back burner?

Although P. said she was getting good at "digging at people" in order to find the answers to her questions, it was alien to her character to behave in such a manner, and she did not feel comfortable with the way she found herself forced to act toward people.

> When you ask questions, [people here] give you the attitude like it's an inconvenience. You have to keep bugging them, going back over and over again, just keeping at them, because you know they will not do it unless you keep at them. A professor said that the reason he gave his tests and a number of time-consuming assignments, is because "I need time to work on my thing to get tenure, publications and research." It just hit me. I'm the reason you're here. If you don't care any more than that, maybe you need to reevaluate your reason for being here.

P. said that she has tried very hard to adjust to the university, but that she has decided to transfer to another school in the fall. She has applied to two small, private colleges within a 70-mile radius of the university, and hoped to be accepted by one. But getting the university to send out her records has turned out to be a major ordeal that has left her more angry and frustrated than ever.

> In January . . . I went to check on my transcripts, and I said, "Have my transcripts been sent?" And so they looked over the thing, and [the woman in the Registrar's Office] said, "No, they haven't." I just kept bugging them after that. The second time I went back, I said, "Could you tell me why they haven't been sent?" She said, "Well, the lady here does it according to deadlines. And [College A's] deadline isn't until February 15." And this is the end of January. And so I said, "Well, as a transfer student, the earlier you get it in, the better it is. Please send it." So I checked back, and she told me, yes, they had been sent. So then I checked back on [College B]. She said, "Well, their deadline isn't till the end of February." And so I said, "Well, they are on rolling admissions. When you're on rolling admissions, it's first come, first serve, especially on a transfer basis . . . because if the rooms are gone, you can't get into the school." So they finally sent that one. I thought everything was fine until . . . [College A] sent a card to my parents, saying, "We do not have your child's

> transcripts or her letter from the Academic Dean." And I just panicked from there. I thought, "Why not?" I'd taken all the necessary steps, and I'd gotten it there in plenty of time. Here it was the very end of March, a month after the deadline, and after all of this, I found out nothing has been done.

P. was extremely upset, because her first choice, College A, an elite, private institution with more than its share of applicants, strictly enforces its admissions deadline. She tried to find out what had happened to her records, particularly a form letter that the Dean of Academic Advising was supposed to have completed, which stated simply that P. was a student in good standing, and was eligible to return to the university.

> When I [first] went to take the [form] letter to Academic Advising, the woman there said, "Fine, P. We'll take care of it. Don't worry about it." Which leads me to believe everything is all right. But when I talked to the lady in Student Affairs, she said, "P., I took [the papers] to Academic Advising personally. Make sure and check, make them look, because they won't look unless you make them, to see that they were sent." And so that's where I got back to Academic Advising. And the [same] woman there said, "We sent them February 5." And then she goes, "Oh, maybe we didn't, because you didn't sign a release." And I'm, like, no one told me to fill out a form. I'm sorry I wasn't born on this campus knowing all the rules and regulations. She said, "Well, someone should have found you and told you." Well, they never tried. Never. And there's nothing in the catalog that says you have to sign a release for the Dean to send his approval letter.

P. understood that everyone makes mistakes, but she could not forgive the uncaring attitude that she perceived from the woman in Academic Advising.

> She was just lacking in caring. Getting into

> another college is important to me. I want to get out of here. I don't like it. This is not the environment that I want for college. College should be more than this. It should be fun. It's not. And so I was just standing there, and I thought I was polite. I said, "Could you check for me, please?" So she comes out and she goes, "Well, maybe they got sent, maybe they didn't." And it really made me angry. I mean, you have a job, evidently you're happy. I'm <u>not</u> happy, and you're telling me you don't care whether I get out of here and am happy or not. That was the message she conveyed to me. "Well, maybe they got sent, and maybe they didn't." I just thought, "Doesn't anybody care?!" They had just blown my chances to go to another college, to get out of here. They had just blown my chances, and they don't even want to say, "I'm sorry, we messed up. We're going to correct the situation." I have absolutely no respect for them. They don't care. It's never their fault. They're always too busy.

P. was not sure whether School A had yet received all of her records, but she was hopeful that School B, her second choice, would accept her as a transfer student. She compared the attitudes at School B with those of the university, and felt that the main difference was that at School B, they were concerned that they were right for <u>her</u> needs; at the university, it was up to her to fit herself into the existing, inflexible system.

> When I got to [School B], the lady in admissions was like, "You ask <u>me</u> the questions. You want to come to this school, so you find out whether it's right for <u>you</u> . . ." I've talked to teachers there, I've talked to students there. I decided this is going to be my last move, and it's going to be a good one. I made one mistake too many, already. [School B] says, "We want you here. We think you're a person. You're not just something we'll cast aside." And that is the feeling I get at [the university].

P. felt that at another school, she would at least be

treated as if she counted for something and was more than merely a name on a computer print-out. She felt that she had something valuable to offer, if only someone would listen to her.

> I've been so frustrated. I think something needs to be done. It's like there are all these highly educated [people], and they have all these psychological [studies], but they never think to step down and say to students, "Hey, what do _you_ think the problem is?" We're the students, we're why every single person here has their job. I think they need to give students more credit than they do. We aren't as stupid as we look. Everybody is scared to say, "Yes, you can do this." It's, "Well, go ask this person, go ask this person, go ask this person." It's just a bureaucratic mess. So much red tape.

After less than two semesters, P. has found herself becoming a person she does not like. She seemed to be spending the majority of her time caught in an uncaring system, trying to be recognized as a human being, with important needs and feelings.

> You have to learn to be a bull dog [here], and just bug them. A lot more attention gets paid to delinquent students. You can't just say, "Well, I'll come back tomorrow." I learned that much. I was pretty much a babe in the woods when I got here. You learn very quickly. If you don't, you sink. They think, "Well, she's a good student, she'll figure it out." You have to learn to just go in and say, "Hey! I want some attention! I need some help! Help me!"

P. felt that she had tried to do just that--but that nobody listened.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Several important recurring themes are apparent throughout the student interviews. Every student in the study spoke of the impersonal and uncaring attitudes and actions of faculty, advisors, and staff members in the university, and none believed that the size of the institution was the sole explanation. Instead, students blamed the condition on the fragmentation of departments into narrowly specialized areas, lack of communication among decision-makers, the low status and perceived lack of power of students, and the bureaucratic organizational structure which tends to create inflexible conditions. The students expressed their frustrations and anger at being treated one moment as if they were incapable of making an intelligent decision, and the next mmoment being expected to know what to do, how to do it, and take full responsibility for the whole process, all without being given adequate information in order to do so.

Every student in the study showed a genuine interest in learning, but they all admitted that they were looking forward to leaving the institution, and that they were taking the easiest courses they knew of in order to accomplish this objective in the shortest time possible.

The six assumptions made by the university about

academic advising, as stated in Chapter I, were analyzed in relationship to the preceding interviews as follows:

Analysis of Assumption #1. That the faculty should be the primary academic advisors, and that the advising function should be a part of their overall contractual responsibilities.

Faculty members have historically assumed the primary responsibility of advising students. In a large university setting, it appears that their sheer numbers, their professional specializations, and cost-effectiveness make them the logical choice.

The importance of faculty advising is reflected in at least two of the objectives of the Mission and Goals statement of academic advising, to wit:

> To promote the highest standards of excellence of the undergraduate professional schools by thoroughly preparing all advisors in their advising responsibilities.

And:

> To promote advisor-advisee interaction for the purpose of stimulating excellence in teaching and enhancing faculty-student relationships.

The goals of advising at U of C are quite clear; however, the students in the study described a system of faculty advising that does not appear to be meeting these objectives as stated.

The students spoke of faculty advisors who were difficult to find, too busy to spend adequate time on their ad-

vising duties, and who "rubber stamped" course schedules without carefully considering students' programs, interests, or special needs. A typical response by faculty members to students seeking guidance on course selection was to hand them a departmental outline of course requirements, which students felt was an extremely impersonal way of dealing with the issue. Students who chose their courses and planned their schedules around a prepared departmental outline without the guidance to go with it, had difficulty understanding the rationale behind the required courses and the relationship to other areas of study.

For students in the study, faculty advising appeared to be either too much or too little; either the advisors did not offer enough help, or they simply told the students what courses to take. In neither instance were students' personal interests considered, nor were they involved in the process of decision-making with their advisors.

Students felt that there were too many assumptions being made about their advising needs. Students themselves assumed that the information being given to them by faculty advisors was correct and timely, when, in fact, in many instances, a meeting with an academic advisor in the Academic Advising Office revealed that the information was incorrect. Students believed that the basic problem was the lack of communication betwen the academic departments of the school and the Office of Academic Advising regarding policies and regulations, and

the concurrent lack of information between academic departments and the Office of Academic Advising regarding departmental changes. Students found themselves caught in the middle.

Students also believed that faculty advisors made the assumption that students know about regulations and course planning and requirements from a combination of information from the college bulletin, the Academic Advising Office, and from other students. In reality, however, students found the catalog to be too general, too difficult to understand, and incomplete; students were reluctant to see advisors in the Academic Advising Office because of the perceptions they had of the office being even busier than their faculty advisors were; and although students admitted that most of their advising came from friends and other students, they were more concerned with the possibility of error from "unofficial" sources.

Overall, the eight students in the study unanimously agreed that faculty advising, as it presently exists at the university, is inadequate, and for them, resulted in enrolling in inappropriate classes that were irrelevant, uninteresting, or beyond their level of competency; misunderstandings about graduation requirements; wasted time and money; and confusion because of incorrect or conflicting advice. All the students, however, believed that at a large institution, faculty advising was necessary by virtue of the

fact that no other group was available, and because it would be unwieldy for all students to attempt to seek advice from the Office of Academic Advising.

Analysis of Assumption #2. That a central office for academic advising is necessary in a large institution for the purpose of coordinating undergraduate advising.

It is assumed that students will consult the Office of Academic Advising when they need guidance in matters that do not pertain to their major department of study, or that which involves information not usually at the disposal of the faculty advisor. But because of the perceived inadequacies of much of the advising by faculty, students often seek information which their faculty advisors are expected to know from the central office staff. The result, in many cases, is that the student is sent to a variety of places, and often receives conflicting information.

The students in the study expressed feelings of powerlessness and alienation in the Administration Building. Some stated that this feeling was further projected into the Office of Academic Advising. The result of these feelings was a reluctance to seek out the necessary information from advisors in the office.

The students said that they understood the need for a central coordinating office for academic advising, simply because no one faculty member or department head could possibly keep abreast of the multitude of changes and

regulations university-wide. It was felt that an effective central office would be the appropriate place to process the information. However, every student in the study stressed the belief that the central office failed to take the next logical step, which was the sharing of that information with faculty advisors, as well as with the students themselves. Students felt that faculty advisors were treated as "middlemen" by the Academic Advising Office; the central office may distribute information to the faculty, and assume it will be passed along to the students, but often the faculty neglect to do so. This results in the type of information gap that students spoke about in the interviews.

It was also felt by the students that many requirements and regulations had been set up for a particular clientele during a period when such policies made sense; however, they agreed that, as time passes, and student bodies change, the same guidelines do not always apply. They felt that, in this regard, some of the requirements and regulations that were being enforced by the central office had lost their original purpose, and were now being followed merely because they were "on the books."

Students believed that a central academic advising office should, above all, be consistent; yet they related incidents where they had been given different information by several people in the office. Although the students said that they could easily forgive mistakes, they deeply resented

being made to feel that the errors were their fault. They spoke of feelings of chastisement, and felt that when they went to the central office, it was with the expectation of being told what they were doing wrong. Once again, the lack of information was cited as a factor; students believed that with adequate knowledge of requirements and regulations, a central office could be used effectively as a coordinator--an agent to assure harmonious functioning--not as a "watchdog," as students felt it was closer to being.

Analysis of Assumption #3. That students should be able to read the university catalog in order to gain most of the necessary information regarding their academic needs and programs, and that the responsibility for completing academic requirements rests with each student.

Students in the study said that they agreed that it should be their responsibility to meet all requirements for graduation, but refused to believe that it should be totally their responsibility. Every student spoke of the feelings of frustration they had experienced at being given incomplete or inadequate information. They referred to the "fine print" in the catalog, requirements that were stressed by the system, but not presented as important in the literature.

Often students found themselves in the position of not knowing enough information even to ask the right questions; if they knew the questions, they were unsure of whom to ask. As part of their responsibility as participating students,

they felt that they should be involved as equal partners in decision-making, and especially decision-making that involved their program planning and course scheduling, as well as department requirements. Students felt that they had no status or power at the university, and as such, were almost never asked for their input on the things that concerned them directly. They expressed their feelings of alienation with a system that "played the game" by their own, often arcane rules, expected students to be passive participants, and yet penalized the students for not being told all the possible moves on the board.

Students spoke of a kind of passive resistance to the university system of regulations and requirements by the fact that they attempted to enroll in the easiest courses they knew of, in order to quickly complete the requirements they had had no choice in selecting. They understood that they were not as wise as many educators who had earned the right to make such decisions; however, they resented being treated as if they, as students, were unimportant and knew nothing, and yet were expected to take full responsibility, anyway.

Students often felt powerless in the face of a system where information is fragmented into specialized areas; they said that they found themselves acting as if seeking information, in an effort to meet the requirements and regulations imposed by the university, was more important than their education.

Analysis of Assumption #4. That a central office of academic advising is a specialized department and, as such, should be concerned only with academic matters.

The fragmentation that students perceived in the university system was reflected in their academic advising experiences, as well. They felt that the advisors in the Office of Academic Advising were often helpful and generally knowledgeable, but they cited a lack of personal interest on the part of advisors as a missing ingredient to the type of holistic advising they were seeking. Most students said they were reluctant to seek guidance from the Counseling Center on personal matters. They did not want to have to make appointments a week in advance for a problem they were concerned about today. The advisors in the Office of Academic Advising, however, conveyed the impression that their job was to solve only academic problems as quickly and as efficiently as possible. They gave the students the feeling that they were too busy or too concerned with the upkeep and interpretation of requirements to ask students personal questions about themselves. Often students felt "processed" as just one more enrollee with a problem, unrecognized as a real person with unique feeings and interests. Students were sent to different places when they asked questions relating to non-academic personal matters or career planning, since the university offers these services as well. Students felt "put off" and were often reluctant to follow through on

referrals made by academic advisors, because doing so necessitated their having to go to several other buildings on campus in order to have their questions answered.

Although students recognized the fact that academic advisors are not certified counselors or psychologists, trained to deal with serious emotional problems, students believed that advising would be more meaningful if advisors were more inclined to see them as a whole person, rather than narrowly as a student with an academic question to be answered.

Analysis of Assumption #5. That if a student is interested in deviating from formally established university programs and procedures, the burden of proof is on the student to convince various administrators and committees within the university, that such an alternative be allowed.

Students in the study believed that most deviations to set procedures were met with suspicion by administrators. It appeared to them that they were treated as if they were "trying to get away with something," and they cited a lack of trust by university personnel that students would do the "right thing."

In academic advising situations, inflexibility was a major complaint by all the students in the study, and even though a process of appeals is in place at the university, most students do not follow through on the procedure. Seeing the university in the role of decision-maker, it was often

difficult for students, with their expressed feelings of powerlessness, to stand up to the system.

Students generally found the academic appeals process to be an uncomfortable experience, even in situations where the requests for deviations from the set policy involved only minor alterations. The students believed that the purpose of making the procedures difficult was a deliberate attempt to discourage such actions, and that if all student exercised their right to appeal many decisions, it would result in a bottleneck in the central advising office.

The ultimate role of the Office of Academic Advising, then, was seen not as a coordinator of information or as an office to assist students in their academic needs, but as an agent concerned mainly with the smooth processing of students.

The appeals process was viewed by students as being an extremely impersonal activity. Rather than pleading their cases face to face with a person who might consider extenuating circumstances on an individual, personal basis, students were told to write letters outlining their explanations and requests. If the reader of the letter (usually the Dean of Academic Advising) felt that the student presented a convincing and valid argument, the appeal would be granted, and the student would be obliged to telephone the office in order to receive the "verdict." If the appeal were turned down, students had to either accept the decision as is, or seek out

another appeal route. It was the opinion of the students in the study that most students would not pursue the matter further, feeling that the odds were against their success at that point.

On the whole, students understood the need for administrators to be involved in serious infractions and major deviations of university policy; however, they felt that excessive attention to reasonable requests such as dropping a difficult course, even after the drop/add deadline, or substituting a higher-level, more interesting course for a lower-level required course, should be dealt with accordingly. Students resented being made to feel that their requests were unreasonable, especially those upper division students who had proved their credibility by being good students.

Because of the perception by students that deviations from the set scheme of things are discouraged, there are less than five students currently enrolled in a Plan II self-planned program of study. Of the students in the sample who had heard of the Plan II option, the general feeling was that it was not worth the time and effort it would take to try and convince the committees involved in the approval process that their plan was worthy of consideration.

<u>Analysis of Assumption #6</u>. That student retention is an important concern of the Office of Academic Advising.

Because the traditional 18 to 22-year-old population has

been declining steadily over the past few years, student retention has become more of a concern on large campuses which in the past have not had to worry about enrollment. Academic advising is being recognized as a viable retention tool.

It seemed to the students in the study that there were many mixed signals being put out by the university. They spoke of recruiters for the school painting a picture that did not fit the reality, and expressed disappointment and anger at being misguided in that way. They did not blame the recruiter, however, as much as they blamed the university for not following through on promises, and then making excuses.

Several students in the study who experienced academic difficulty during one semester felt cast aside like an old shoe, when they were notified by letter that they were ineligible to return to the university. Of 384 students who received such letters, only 98 knew enough or cared enough, at that point, to appeal. It seemed incongruous to the students that the school should spend so much time and effort recruiting students for the university, only to turn their backs on them at the first sign of difficulty. When those same students received a subsequent letter expressing how much the university cared about them, they indicated their incredulity at its sincerity.

Students also believed that they were seldom treated as if they were important, and that most of the time they were

made to feel as if they were intruding into the private domain of faculty and staff. They felt as if they were expendable segments of the university, and that very few people showed by their actions that they cared whether individual students stayed at the university or not.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation was written from the perspectives of eight university students. In some ways, it was easy to write, because as a student myself, I have experienced many of the same feelings that they expressed. As an academic advisor, working with other advisors in the Academic Advising Office, however, I was also able to understand some of the situations that they confronted daily. I knew that most of these advisors and staff members tried very hard to provide students with the help and understanding they were seeking, and had no wish to be put in the position of university "policemen," known only for their interpretations and enforcement of the system's rules and regulations. And yet, these appeared to be the perceptions of the students, sincerely felt and honestly related.

Academic advising represents only one aspect of a student's university experience, and the many problems and concerns faced by students in that one area are actually only a small part of a larger picture. Students spoke of similar treatment and feelings in the registrar's office, in the cashier's office, in the classrooms, with residence hall administrators and cafeteria workers, and included virtually every aspect of campus life as contributing to their feelings of alienation. And although most students do eventually earn their degrees, as Benezet (1981) pointed out, it is often

without the feeling of having participated in the process as a contributor. Although Bowen (1977) believed that one of the most important benefits of higher education is the increased capacity of students to cope with bureaucracies, social pressures, false claims, misleading advertising, and manipulation, I think we must seriously question whether these things should be tolerated as a necessary, experiential part of anyone's education.

Philosophies of education and mission and goals statements are usually cited broadly and succinctly in college and university catalogs. Even large, comprehensive institutions, such as the one in the study, point to their liberal arts mission as being an important aspect of the educational process. It seems incongruous, however, to speak about the goals of "liberating the individual," when the means are so mired down with the elements that are the very antithesis of freedom. As Chickering (1981) indicated, the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of the policies within educational institutions must be brought closer together.

Universities, as well as other complex institutions, are organized in such a way that they function efficiently and for the good of the most people. According to Merton (1962) a premium is placed on role assignment, hierarchically arranged authority, expert control, continuity, and a clearly defined set of regulations necessary for smooth operations.

In order to appear to be fair to all, the arrangement also eliminates personalized relationships and nonrational considerations, and maintains a high degree of reliability of behavior and a degree of conformity with prescribed patterns of action. Although this might sound like progress and efficiency to a corporate businessman, it is difficult to justify in education, unless the purpose of education is, in fact, to teach young people to be and to think in efficient, impersonal, businesslike ways.

Academic advising, like most areas of specialization within the institutional structure, is fragmented by virtue of its narrowly defined functions and physical separation from other departments. Its basic assumption appears to be that students, for the most part, enroll in the university already knowing what they are interested in studying.
The majority of academic advising actually begins with guiding the student through a particular major, rather than emphasizing an earlier phase, when the student is beginning to explore a number of educational alternatives. In order to facilitate and expedite their metriculation through the university, students are encouraged to declare majors at a time when they are least prepared to do so. Because different majors have different course requirements, students are often penalized if they wish to change their focus of study. Experimentation with different disciplines is discouraged because of the time it takes; students' degrees are often

delayed because they took "extra" courses that did not "fit" into their final declared major. This raises the issue of what education is actually for.

Broadly speaking, Hutchins (1943, p. 22) stated that the aims of education should be to encourage "moral, intellectual, and spiritual growth," and that "without one, we cannot have the others." But narrow specialization, in academic advising as well as in all other aspects of higher education, makes it extremely difficult for students to pull together and to rationalize the separate parts. They find the process to be dehumanizing and manipulative, but adapt to it in order to obtain the credentialling that society has convinced them is essential for their success in life.

It has been suggested by many that perhaps students must be controlled and manipulated, as those in the study described themselves, because the alternative, especially with large numbers of students, is potential chaos; that students who are original, curious, and autonomous are nearly always a "finger in the eye" of an ordered system. But Bowers (1974) suggested that when students are encouraged to be passive, unchallenging of rules and regulations, and left out of the decision-making process, the result is a low level of involvement, which narrows their range of interpretations and abilities to imagine more possibilities for choices.

Students in the '60s reacted to these feelings of alienation by actively protesting on campuses throughout the

world, in sit-ins and other types of demonstrations. Their persistent demands forced administrators to make concessions by adding and expanding programs, revising rules and regulations, and allowing for more student involvement within the decision-making process of the institution. Because of the transient nature of student bodies, however, these changes over the last ten years have slowly reverted to largely favoring the university. As a result of the protest movement, today's students are more aware of their rights and are acquainted with legal procedures, but the present student-as-consumer movement has taken on a different perspective than that of the '60s. Although the courts are becoming more involved in what used to be primarily academic decisions, under the guise of "contract interpretation," current cases relate more to those involving the rejection of students for admission, rather than the rights of students already enrolled in the institution (Edwards & Nordin, 1979).

As consumers, students appear to be more concerned with inflation, unemployment, and high interest rates. Because of these concerns, they are more interested in preparing for the world of work than they are in changing the system; they see the educational process as being not an end in itself, but only as a means to an end. The college campuses on which most activist protests are presently occurring are mainly those elite institutions where students generally represent a wealthier, more powerful segment of society (Evans, 1985).

Students today are not apathetic. They are angry and frustrated with higher education. They do not understand what is happening to them, much less how to change things. They feel powerless to challenge the authority structure; even if they have legitimate complaints, the bureaucracy of the university system makes it virtually impossible for them to know to whom to direct their complaints. Students are told "this is university policy," or "that's just the way it's done here." They may question certain regulations and policies, but are powerless to challenge the faceless entity of the system. Often they blame themselves or their peers for the state of affairs. Nearly every student in the study expressed the belief that unless basically told by someone within the system which directions were most valuable for them to take, they would probably "goof off" and take the easiest route possible. In effect, they reflected the system's lack of trust in them to make intelligent decisions that would be the most beneficial to them. The students, themselves, were convinced that they were incapable of making such decisions. The alienation that the eight students expressed came through clearly in the interviews, but it was also clear that they were not advocating chaos. They wanted some structure, and they expressed their willingness to be guided. What they seemed to want was a reduction in the alienating processes and procedures that can result from "an institutionalized approach to education" (Bowers, 1974, p.

77). According to Metzger (1970), perhaps the question educators need to answer, then, is how authority can be removed as an issue and retained as a resource.

Bowers (1974) believed that alienation is more than an existential mood, and that its existence is a deeply rooted part of the structure of our social institutions. He felt that its acceptance by people at least partly results from the ways in which alienating experiences are socially constructed and reinforced.

> The actual routinization of behavior is caused by the mechanical or social techniques being used, but how the individual perceives and interprets himself in that specific situation is shaped by the definitions of reality he has acquired from significant others and internalized as part of his own explanatory framework . . . Being socialized to this passive role makes him highly vulnerable to the ultimate form of alienation where the external reality is seen as immune to his own interpretations. (pp. 77, 79)

Fromm (1962, p. 59) felt that alienation in modern society "pervades the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, to the state, to his fellow man, and to himself." Because we live in a world of "things," and strive daily to earn money for more "things," our only connection with those things is that we know how to manipulate or to consume them. Friendliness to others, he believed, is superficial, and man's relationship to his fellow man basically distant and indifferent. As Bailey (1977, pp. 257-258) reported,

> This nation is in woefully short supply of people equipped to look at problems as a whole, at life as a whole, at the world as a whole. Without a sense of the whole, we have no way of evaluating the parts, no ways of appraising the importance of the expert, and no way of seeing that the fragmentation and violence we lament in the world around us is but the mirror image of our own cluttered and frenetic psyches.

Many feel that the involvement of young people with drugs and alcohol is a direct result of their feelings of alienation and powerlessness. The search for self and for love is reflected in many aspects of everyday life: it is the recurring theme in advertising, in television and motion pictures, and in many popular songs.

In order for students to find this meaning in their lives, the educational process may necessarily require a radically different perspective than that which is apparent in most colleges and universities today. Rather than attempting to socialize students through a process that forces them to "fit" themselves into an institution's pre-determined definition of reality, perhaps, as Bowers (1974) suggested, educators should take into account each student's existential situation, view the student as a unique, thinking, feeling individual, and work toward a system that will help each to take the responsibility for his or her own educational experience.

The latest research in academic advising is concerned with colleges and universities taking a developmental approach to education. To date, however, there are very few

studies which present the type of qualitative research as presented in this dissertation. Even though the developmental approach claims to be holistic and concerned with students' needs and interests, very little is actually written from the perspective of the student. Without this dimension, even with the best of intentions, the process remains one which acts on behalf of the student, rather than one in which the input of the student is considered to be a valuable part of the experience. Unless the student is included as an active partner, even a developmental approach can represent an impersonal and detached method of advising.

Quantitative methods could not have brought out the strong, inner feelings of the students in the study regarding their personal experiences in the university. Questionnaires, which solicit yes/no or even short-answer responses are limited in scope, and do not allow for the expression of the types of anxieties and frustrations which have become a part of the students' academic lives. It is a sad commentary on the educational system to talk with vital, intelligent, young people who have been made to feel inadequate to offer opinions and suggestions, which may lead to valuable insights for improvements and changes. All of the students in the study, when initially approached for the interviews, admitted to having "a few problems," but seemed to feel that their experiences would not be of value for the study. After becoming involved in the conversations, however, they

appeared to become more aware of how deeply they were being affected by the system, and they expressed their gratification at being able to ventilate those feelings to someone who would listen.

Listening to what students have to say has not been high on the list of priorities of most institutions. But if given the opportunity, young people have proved over and over again that they can make definite, viable contributions to education.

Higher education does not have to be a packaging and processing routine. It can aim toward an existential experience for each student, one which will allow for critical thinking in a complex, complicated world. We owe it to our children. We owe it to ourselves.

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