My personal advising philosophy stems from the belief that advising is an integral part of a student’s overall college experience, and that an institution’s advising program, working in tandem with other services and resources on campus, will positively impact student learning and development (NACADA, 2005).

At the heart of any advising program is the relationship between advisor and student, which must be built on trust, respect, fairness, and concern for the student and his or her success. I believe that central to this relationship is the understanding that my role, as an advisor, is to empower the student to make informed decisions for him or herself. In order to do this, I will be:

- a good listener, attentive, knowledgeable about the student’s intended or proposed degree path and its academic requirements, well informed about resources and services available, diligent in note taking and record keeping, professional, and committed to upholding high ethical standards.

As an advisor, I will uphold the following ethical principles outlined by Lowenstein and Grites (1993):

- Seek the best possible education for the student.
- Treat all students equitably.
- Assist the student in developing his or her own ability to make decisions.
- Advocate for the student with other offices.
- Tell the truth.
- Respect the student’s privacy.
- Support my institution’s educational philosophy and its policies.
- Maintain the credibility of the advising program.
- Be a respectful colleague.

In my work, I will strive to take a “whole person approach” to advising, recognizing that the students who I will be working with have different opinions, frames of reference, backgrounds, life experiences, and needs—both in and out of the classroom. I will need to be attuned to what the student is saying—and more importantly, how it is being said, or what is left unsaid—and be aware of when a student is at a critical point, emotionally or otherwise, and to know when to refer the student for help from other services on campus, if appropriate. I will create a welcoming and relaxed office environment, and extend this to my communications via email, or phone. I will be mindful of students’ varying levels of stress, and different needs, and by maintaining a friendly and professional presence, I would hope that students will be able to open up to me with their concerns or questions about their progress.

While I am interested in many aspects of advising, I am particularly interested in advising students who are undecided. Undecided students are presented with both challenges and opportunities when they enter college—the first two years of an undergraduate general education program allows students to fully experience as many different areas that they may be interested in, and enables them to discover fields for which they have an aptitude. At the same time, they
need to be mindful of the prerequisite classes that they have to complete within those two years in order to declare a major at the end of their sophomore year. How do advisors help students learn to make informed decisions that will enable them to explore different fields, yet graduate on time? My priority for an undecided student would be to help him or her identify defined areas of interest early on, share information about the courses that need to be taken in order to progress in a timely manner, and guide the student on how to chart a path to success, listing academic and career goals.

Kuh (2008) notes that advising is grounded in a talent-development philosophy—the idea that students can learn anything the institution teaches, provided that the right conditions are met. This is a belief that I would subscribe to as an advisor. For this reason, when I advise students, I will aspire to be as informed as possible about all the academic and extracurricular opportunities, and support networks available on campus, and to share this information, as much as possible, with the students I advise. To use Penn State President Eric Barron’s sports car analogy: "When students decided to come to Penn State and pay their tuition, they purchased a sports car, but too many of them will only drive it 20 miles per hour" (Penn State, 2014). My goal would be to connect students with all the resources available that would enrich their academic experience.

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