Abstract:

As advisors, we need to be able to change with the times. We are the batters who are rounding the bases of advising. First base is face-to-face contact. This long used method of advising includes orientations, meetings, tutoring, and the face-to-face encounter in the hallway. Second base is the use of computers in advising, such as, e-mails, power points, even making appointments. Third base is implementing online mentoring and advising in the Dept. of Nursing at IPFW. Envisioned as faculty and advisor driven has morphed into something else. The most effective has been student-to-student mentoring, totally online in discussion groups. To reach home base, we have utilized all avenues to reach and advise students. Students can cross the home plate and graduate as advising changes with the times.

Discussion:

Advising in the Department of Nursing at IPFW has switched up as our nursing students cross the home plate and score a career in nursing. Over time, students have crossed first base of face-to-face encounters with their advisors. Then, round to second base, computer usage has saved time and proved to be effective in advising. Crossing third, faculty, advisors, and students use computers in even more innovative ways. What was thought to utilize computers for extension of our Caring Communities, has morphed into something even more meaningful and effective.

In the Dept. of Nursing at IPFW, the nursing faculty has utilized in person Caring Communities for years to connect with the first year nursing students. Over the course of the semester a faculty member would attempt to meet in person with a group of 8 students and have pizza or just talk about how the student was adjusting to the nursing program. Over time, the caring communities have fallen by the wayside because of nursing faculty and students not being able to find times to meet in person.

This semester, a committee of faculty was formed to revisit the idea of caring communities. It was decided to meet the student where they are – online. Our 100-level nursing students and 300-level nursing students are required to post in online discussions on Blackboard. The 300-level nursing students are the mentors to the 100-level nursing students. A nursing faculty or advisor is assigned as the facilitator for each group. The original thought was that the student could make a connection to a nursing faculty or advisor, but overtime the online discussions have turned into an arena where the nursing students have gained support and motivation from each other.

As nursing advisors, we saw the potential of the Blackboard format for relaying information to students and for allowing online discussion. This semester, we started a Pre-nursing Blackboard page that includes information about Admission, Application, Resources for Success, Student Nurses of IPFW Organization and also the online discussion forums. The discussion forums are
split into groups that students can join and go between, Students who are Parents, Returning Adult, Diversity, English as a Second Language, First Generation College Student, Transfer Student, Traditional Student, Student Housing, and Talk to a Nursing Student. The most popular group has been “Talk to a Nursing Student” where 4 of our current nursing students respond to pre-nursing students questions about being a nursing student. Over the course of the semester the pre-nursing students have gotten used to this new format and have started talking to each other.

As advisors, we have found that the best method of advising is to integrate the old with the new by utilizing face to face, computers, and Blackboard format to reach our students and help them in their path to graduation.

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