

FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC ADVISING:
WORDS OF WISDOM FROM ACADEMIC ADVISORS

A Dissertation
by
ANGELA DAWN MEAD

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APPROVED BY:

Jim Killacky, Ed.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee
Director, Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

Alecia Youngblood Jackson, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

James Lancaster, Ed.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee

Edelma D. Huntley, Ph.D.
Dean, Cratis Williams Graduate School

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Abstract

FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC ADVISING: WORDS OF WISDOM FROM ACADEMIC ADVISORS

Angela D. Mead

B.A., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

M.A., Appalachian State University

Ed.D., Appalachian State University

Dissertation Committee Chairperson: Jim Killacky, Ed.D.

Prior research has demonstrated unequivocally that first-generation college students do not enroll, persist or graduate from four-year institutions at comparable rates as students from more educated families. With almost half (47%) of all students in American higher education as first-generation college students, and with their college attendance, persistence and graduation rates lower than those of their peers from more educated homes, it behooves institutions to pay close attention to this special population of student.

A great deal of research has focused on explaining the reasons behind first-generation college students' decreased college attendance and graduation rates. Much of the research points towards using academic advising as a strategy to assist first-generation college students, but there is a gap in exactly what academic advisors should do to assist first-generation college students. In this study, intensive qualitative interviews with 10 academic advisors who are also first-generation college students

themselves, and who can therefore see both sides of the issue, addressed how academic advising can help first-generation college students. Transcripts from interviews, notes from the interviews and documents collected from the participants were coded using thematic analysis to arrive at three major themes.

Main themes from the research were the characteristics associated with being a first-generation college student, the role of an advisor with first-generation college students and the relationship to the conceptual framework for the study, cultural capital model. These themes and attendant subthemes are explored in depth, and the best practices and implications for advisors, institutions and graduate programs are discussed in relation to prior research on first-generation college students and academic advising. Suggestions for further research are also presented.